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US launches rare strike against pro-Assad troops

By SARAH EL DEEB
Associated Press

BEIRUT — The U.S. military launched airstrikes on Syrian government-backed troops Wednesday after a major attack on its allied forces and U.S. advisers by at least 500 fighters, battle tanks, howitzers and mortars.

Syrian state-run media said the rare U.S. strike on government-backed troops killed and wounded dozens of tribal fighters, calling it a new effort "to support terrorism."

The U.S.-led coalition said its action in Deir el-Zour province was "self-defense."

The overnight attack, which a U.S. military official earlier said killed about 100 of

the attackers, added a layer to the Syrian conflict that is once again plunging into a new and unpredictable spiral of violence.

The attack in Deir el-Zour province in northeastern Syria occurred in crowded battle space. A stronghold of Islamic State militants until late last year, the province also was the group's main source of oil revenue. U.S.-backed Kurdish-led forces have

been fighting for control of Deir el-Zour with rival Russia-backed Syrian troops that are reinforced by Iran-supported militias.

The U.S.-backed forces control areas east of the Euphrates River and most of the oil and gas fields, while government forces are based in the west.

SEE STRIKE ON PAGE 10

For US troops in Afghanistan, new questions about combat role

By DAN LAMOTHE
The Washington Post

When Marine Brig. Gen. Roger Turner's task force deployed to Afghanistan's most violent province last spring, it came with an uncertainty: To what degree would it be necessary to deploy U.S. troops in harm's way as the military helped the Afghan government beat back the Taliban?

Turner characterized the dispatching of about 300 U.S. troops, primarily Marines from Camp Lejeune, N.C., to Helmand province ahead of their deployment as a "high-risk mission" in which combat was possible. The advisers were initially deployed to advise at the "corps level," a description the U.S. military uses to describe U.S. service-members who coordinate and plan with senior Afghan officers in operations but don't accompany Afghan troops on combat operations.

In August, President Donald Trump announced that after months of deliberation, he would not withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan, and in fact would modestly increase the size of the U.S. military presence and would expand what those already deployed could do. That would include allowing U.S. troops to advise Afghan kandaks, a distinction that could put Americans in grave danger more frequently.

That turned out to mostly not be the case.

SEE COMBAT ON PAGE 9

U.S. Marines with Task Force Southwest assess the integrity of a weapons range at Camp Shorabak, Afghanistan, in January. None of the Marines deployed to the "high-risk mission" in Helmand province earned the Combat Action Ribbon.

CONNOR ROBBINS
Courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps



MILITARY

Army in Europe gets tech upgrade

Sensors to aid in electronic warfare

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. ground units in Europe are the first in the Army to be outfitted with new sensors designed to protect troop formations from Russian cyberintrusion and better challenge adversaries in an increasingly contested electronic warfare battle space.

Delivery of the equipment will be completed later this month, the Army said.

"This equipment will provide additional sensors on the battlefield to contribute to the commander's common operating picture and assist in driving the targeting process," said Capt. Sean Lynch, an electronic warfare officer with the Vilseck, Germany-based 2nd Cavalry Regiment.

The new electronic warfare systems ensure that commanders at the brigade level and lower can "geolocate enemy emitters" and "deny tactical communications," Lynch said in a statement.

The moves to better equip units for electronic warfare come as the Pentagon is shifting its focus to sophisticated threats posed by Russia and China.

The 2018 National Defense Strategy, released last month, warns that the U.S. military's advantage over "near-peer" adversaries is eroding. Among the operational concerns is that Russia's advanced electronic warfare systems could jam radio and allied



JENNIFER BURN/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Soldiers from 1st Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment ride in their Stryker Combat Vehicle during Allied Spirit VII at Hohenfels Training Area in Germany in November 2017.

GPS networks.

U.S. Army units in Europe have been grappling with such concerns for the past three years as operations have intensified along NATO's eastern flank.

Russia's deployment of electronic jammers to disrupt Ukrainian military radio communication has also caught the attention of American commanders.

"Russia knows how we roll," now-retired Gen. Philip Breedlove warned in 2016 when he was head of U.S. European Command. "They have invested a lot in electronic warfare because they know we are a connected and precise force and they need to disconnect us to make us imprecise."

After Russia's 2014 intervention in Ukraine, efforts to adapt began to rise to the unit level. In 2015, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment requested more powerful guns, which finally arrived in December in the form of new 30 mm autocannons mounted on the unit's Stryker vehicles.

Electronic warfare gear has also been gradually coming online. Besides the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, soldiers with the Vicenza, Italy-based 173rd Airborne Brigade and the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, are all slated to receive the latest equipment this month.

The technology, developed in response to an operational needs request from U.S. Army Europe,

is considered an interim fix while the Army continues development on more advanced electronic warfare capabilities.

"These soldiers are the Army's first users of dedicated electronic warfare capabilities for brigade and below, and among the most advanced in Army," Col. Marty Hagenston, an Army project manager for electronic warfare, said in a statement. "We are already seeing them build impressive tactics, techniques and procedures from the ground up as well as task organize to best achieve their commander's desired end state."

vandiver.john@stripes.com
Twitter: @john_vandiver

Navy says detailing error fixed

By JASON BEHNKE
Stars and Stripes

Thousands of sailors were left thinking their orders had been canceled because of an error in the Navy's interactive detailing program.

On Saturday, more than 4,850 sailors mistakenly received notices stating that their letters of intent had been canceled, the service said in a statement Wednesday.

The error was discovered on Monday and fixed the next day, the Navy said.

The issue likely sent many sailors into a panic, but Rear Adm. John Meier, the director of the Career Management Department, said in a statement that the system is now displaying the correct information.

"I want to make clear that no orders were actually canceled," he said.

"My team is reaching out to those sailors who received the erroneous notifications to assure them that their orders remain on track."

A message posted on the Navy detailers' Facebook page says that the detailing program, known as CMS-ID, has been fully restored and that sailors can resume using it as normal.

behnke.jason@stripes.com
Twitter: @JasonFrom50

TODAY

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MILITARY

Admiral says Navy looks to reform after scandal

By CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Adm. Bill Moran, vice chief of naval operations, said Wednesday that the Navy is addressing new policy reforms in the wake of the “Fat Leonard” fraud and corruption scandal.

Moran, who said he couldn't comment directly on the case because it remains an ongoing investigation, said there are changes and policy efforts underway to thwart a repeat of one of the biggest scandals to hit the Navy.

Among the changes, Moran, who made the comments during a congressional hearing, said the service has installed new layers of oversight in its contracting process for overseas ports.

“Most of the issues involve contracting for services on overseas ports,” he told a House Armed Services Committee subpanel. “So we have taken a very strong turn on the process by which we do that. We put layers of oversight into how those contracts are issued and who is issuing them.”

The massive Justice Department case involves Malaysian defense contractor Leonard Glenn Francis, also known as “Fat Leonard,” who traded money, travel, gifts and prostitutes with officers in the 7th Fleet for classified material about U.S. ship and

submarine schedules. More than two dozen have been criminally charged in the case, including a former Navy commander who pleaded guilty last week to a federal bribery charge.

The case is the biggest facing the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, which is the criminal investigative arm of the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, said Glenn Fine, the DOD's principal deputy inspector general. Francis' contract firm, Glenn Defense Marine Asia, orchestrated a scheme to defraud the Navy of tens of millions of dollars by routinely overbilling for goods and services, Fine said.

The Navy has established a Consolidated Disposition Authority, or CDA, to determine whether hundreds of Navy officers should be charged under the Uniform Code of Military Justice or receive administrative action, Fine said. The CDA has already adjudicated more than 300 cases, he said.

“This is one of the largest and most complex public corruption criminal cases in DOD history,” Fine said. “And it involves disturbing and widespread ethical lapses throughout the Navy's 7th Fleet.”

The comments on the case Wednesday came during a wide-ranging hearing before the

House Armed Services subcommittee on military personnel that focused on senior officer misconduct problems.

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., the ranking Democrat on the subpanel, expressed concern that a whistleblower didn't report the scandal early on since it entailed such a large network.

“It is probably the most egregious case in the history, certainly of the Navy if not the military in general,” Speier said. “Because so many people were involved and so many people corrupted by this individual, I'm stunned there weren't any bystanders that spoke up.”

In an exchange with Speier, Moran agreed there will be an examination once the case is closed to identify the holes in the chain of command that allowed the corruption plan to move forward.

“We're, hopefully, getting to the very end of this now,” he said of the case. “When it is done and all the files are turned over to us, we will do that. There is a process in place to make sure we evaluate every single case that comes to the Navy; whether they are handled by the Department of Justice or not, they come to us for final resolution.”

grisales.claudia@stripes.com
Twitter: @cgrisales



Obtained by The Washington Post

Adm. Mike Mullen, who served as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from Oct. 1, 2007, to Sept. 30, 2011, shakes hands with Leonard Glenn Francis in 2007. Whenever Francis met with Navy brass, no matter how briefly, he made sure to have an employee tag along with a camera.

Assault reports double at West Point, up slightly at other academies

By LOLITA C. BALDOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of sexual assaults reported at the U.S. Military Academy roughly doubled during the last school year, according to data reviewed by The Associated Press, in the latest example of the armed forces' persistent struggle to root out such misconduct.

It's the fourth year in a row that sexual assault reports increased at the school in West Point, N.Y. There were 50 cases in the school year that ended last summer, compared with 26 made during the 2015-16 school year. By comparison, the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., and the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., saw only slight increases.

Defense Department and West Point officials said the big jump at the Military Academy resulted from a concerted effort to encourage victims to come forward. But the dramatic and consistent increases may suggest more assaults are happening.

“I'm very encouraged by the reporting,” Lt. Gen. Robert Caslen, superintendent at West Point, told the AP in an interview.



AP

The number of sexual assaults reported at the U.S. Naval Academy increased slightly in the 2016-17 school year, according to data reviewed by The Associated Press, while the number reported at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y., doubled.

“I recognize that people are not going to understand” the desire for increased reporting, he said. But, he added, “I've got the steel stomach to take the criticism.”

The annual report on sexual assaults at the three military academies is due out this month. The Naval Academy's reports increased to 29 last year from 28. The Air Force Academy's also

edged up by one, to 33.

About 12,000 students are enrolled across all three institutions. The AP reviewed the data ahead of its public release.

The report highlights persistent problems within the Air Force Academy's sexual assault prevention office that emerged late last year. Staffing and management issues led to sweeping

disciplinary actions, the resignation of the director and an office restructuring.

Those problems could cast doubt on a sharp decline in reported sexual assaults at the Air Force Academy for the 2015-16 school year, considering a widespread loss of confidence in the office. Students may have been reluctant to file reports.

There have been worrying trends.

An anonymous survey released last year suggested there were more sexual assaults, unwanted sexual contact and other bad behavior at all three academies. It found 12 percent of women and nearly 2 percent of men said they experienced unwanted sexual contact. The largest increases were at the Army and Navy academies.

In response, West Point leaders took steps to get more victims to come forward. “When we saw that, we did a complete review of our strategy,” Caslen said. “We went after increased reporting.”

Officials moved the sexual assault reporting center to a more accessible area on campus with a private entrance. It had been in a building where students facing discipline had to go.

“I've been telling them to do that for years,” said Nate Galbreath, deputy director of the Pentagon's sexual assault prevention office. “Walking into the building where lots of people who are getting in trouble go, that is a real disincentive for people to come forward and make a report.”

West Point also loosened regulations forcing cadets to publicly report sexual assaults. Now they can seek help anonymously without filing a formal report, which many victims are reluctant to do.

Military leaders have said that an increase in sexual assault reports is good because it shows that students are aware of treatment programs and showing confidence in the system. Officials say they want to see the number of reports more closely mirror the higher levels of bad behavior suggested in their annual anonymous surveys.

The overall goal, however, is more prevention, fewer assaults and effective help for victims.

Brig. Gen. Omar Jones, the Army's public affairs chief, said this year's increase resulted from “proactive and deliberate initiatives” to help victims report incidents.

MILITARY

Marines skeptical despite exoneration in war crimes case

By ANDREW deGRANDPRE

The Washington Post

A North Carolina congressman says the Marine Corps is "publicly exonerating" several veterans it wrongly accused of committing war crimes more than a decade ago in Afghanistan, but those blackballed by the ordeal remain skeptical of the Pentagon's sincerity.

The Marine Corps does not intend to re-examine the case, according to a letter from the Pentagon released Wednesday by Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C., although top leaders have signaled their intent to provide counseling and other assistance to the 30 men who say they've suffered personally and professionally as a result of the military's effort to prosecute and imprison them.

"We are concerned to hear of the challenges many members of Fox Company are facing — which are, unfortunately, all too common among our combat veterans," says the letter to Jones from Maj. Gen. Frederick Padilla, who serves as staff director for the Marine Corps commandant, Gen. Robert Neller.

Jones announced the development in a news release. A spokesman for Neller declined to provide further comment, saying Padilla's letter "articulates the service's position."

Fox Company, in 2007, was the first unit deployed into combat from what was then the Marines' new special operations force, MARSOC. After a turbulent first month in Afghanistan, including a hellish battle near the Pakistan border, all 120 elite Marines were expelled from the war zone by U.S. commanders. The 30-man platoon that came under attack was accused of slaughtering civilians, allegations fueled by erroneous media coverage immediately following the shootout and by senior American officials' denunciations of one commander referred to the incident as a "stain" on the military's honor — before all of the facts had been determined.

"Too often, the Marine Corps and the other services don't give the benefit of the doubt to the warrior," Jones told The Washington Post, reflecting on his successful 14-year effort to clear the names of two deceased pilots falsely held responsible for a crash that left 19 servicemembers dead. "This, to me, has always been an issue of fairness. Soldiers and Marine Corps Marines support Marines." After so many years, I am grateful the commandant wrote me this letter vindicating what Fox Company did during that firefight."

The Marines were cleared of criminal wrongdoing in 2008 after a military court examined the case. At the time, a three-

star general concluded the troops had "acted appropriately" on the battlefield.

That phrase has been misinterpreted inside and outside the military to mean "we got away with murder," said Fred Galvin, 48, Fox Company's commander during the deployment. The general's determination was announced on the eve of a long holiday weekend, he noted, calling the timing a deliberate move to bury the story. As a consequence, those assigned to the unit still feel ostracized.

Galvin, a combat decorated officer who retired from the military in 2014, was relieved of command before Fox Company was sent home from Afghanistan. He has condemned the institution for refusing to make a public overture formally absolving the unit, saying it's his obligation as their commanding officer to speak up on behalf of his men.

As Jones explained in a December letter to Neller imploring him to look into the matter, Fox Company's Marines "have not been able to hold jobs, sustain marriages and healthy relationships, and have struggled to maintain a level of mental and emotional health that has caused some to contemplate, or even attempt, to take his own life." Their hardships were documented in a five-part investigative series published in 2015 by Military Times.

Padilla's letter, dated Jan. 19, indicates he directed a subordinate officer in charge of the service's Wounded Warrior Regiment to make contact with Galvin and his men "to ensure they are receiving appropriate and all necessary care and support." As of Wednesday, no one from the U.S. Marine Corps had followed up with them, Galvin said.

Jones is trying to secure another gesture of good faith from the military: uniform badges designating Fox Company's eligible members Marine Raiders, as the service's commanders are known. Much like the trident worn by Navy SEALs, the Raider insignia is a gold-colored device that represents the arduous training one must complete to earn the elite status.

The Raiders' motto, Spiritus Invictus, is emblazoned on the badge. Traditionally, from Latin, it means unconquerable spirit. Marine Raiders began wearing the device in 2016, long after most members of Fox Company had moved on.

"These Marines, they've earned that," Galvin said. "It'll be a sign to others that we've been brought back into the fold, that we're in good standing. It'll make all the difference in the world, and the commandant doesn't have to say a word."

A Pentagon official said the Marine Corps has not ruled out allowing them to apply for the device.



AP

Defense Department investigators said there were 803 complaints filed against senior military and defense officials last fiscal year, but only 144 were deemed credible and investigated by the inspector general. Forty-nine senior officials were found guilty of misconduct.

Pentagon misconduct complaints increase, but fewer found guilty

By LOLITA C. BALDOR

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of complaints filed against senior military and defense officials has increased over the past several years, but more cases are being rejected as not credible and fewer officers are being found guilty of misconduct, according to data from Defense Department investigators.

Overall, there were 803 complaints filed in the fiscal year that ended last Sept. 30, compared with 787 the previous year. But just 144 were deemed credible and investigated by the inspector general, and 49 senior officials were eventually found guilty of misconduct. Allegations against the officials often involve ethical misconduct, such as having an inappropriate relationship, but they also include violating travel rules, wrongly accepting gifts, sending subordinates on personal errands or treating workers badly.

The data were released Wednesday during a House Armed Services personnel subcommittee

hearing. Glenn Fine, who is serving as the Pentagon's inspector general, said the decline in the number of cases being investigated is due to a more thorough screening process of the complaints that come in. As a result, he said, about one-third of the cases that are investigated are ultimately substantiated. That rate is a bit lower than last year, but much higher than previous years. The rate in 2008 was 14 percent.

Senior military leaders also told the panel that they are seeing far more so-called whistleblower complaints that can trigger investigations and stall careers, but only a tiny fraction of the alleged offenders are found guilty.

Fine told the House panel that just two whistleblower cases charging a senior official with retaliation were substantiated in the 2017 fiscal year, compared with three in each of the two previous years. Whistleblower cases usually allege that an officer or superior has retaliated against a lower ranking servicemember or worker for making some type of

complaint.

According to Fine, the number of retaliation complaints filed against senior officials increased from 145 to 165 over the past five years. More broadly, complaints against all department individuals jumped by nearly 80 percent over that same time period.

"Whistleblower reprisal has skyrocketed because of the misuse and misapplication of whistleblower reprisal against senior officials. It is off the charts," Lt. Gen. David Quantock, the Army's inspector general, told the committee, noting that just 4 percent of the Army cases are substantiated.

He said the complaints are often made by a soldier or civilian after they have been held accountable for misconduct or poor performance.

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MILITARY

Myanmar's place at Cobra Gold draws ire

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers are demanding Myanmar's exclusion from U.S.-led military exercises in neighboring Thailand next week amid pressure for more American sanctions in response to atrocities against Rohingya Muslims.

Myanmar's planned participation in the Cobra Gold exercise, which starts Tuesday, comes as its security forces are accused of killing hundreds if not thousands of civilians and burning down villages after Rohingya militant attacks last summer. More than 680,000 Rohingya — loathed in majority Buddhist Myanmar and denied citizenship — have fled to Bangladesh, joining hundreds of thousands more already sheltering there. They are unlikely to return any time soon.

That makes the country's involvement in Cobra Gold, America's largest, annual multi-national drills in the Asia-Pacific, all the more controversial, although Myanmar has taken part before. Up to three officers from Myanmar are being invited to observe the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief portion of the drills, Pentagon spokesman Marine Lt. Col. Christopher Logan said. He said the identity and

ranks of the officers participating is still under discussion.

"Simply put, militaries engaged in ethnic cleansing should not be honing their skills alongside U.S. troops," Sen. John McCain, the Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, told The Associated Press.

The criticism by Democrats and Republicans in Congress reflects the souring view of the Southeast Asian nation's transformation from decades of army rule to democracy as evidence of widespread abuses has mounted. Myanmar's siege-like denial it's done anything wrong has only furthered its estrangement from much of the world. Before last year's crackdown, McCain was advocating more U.S.-Myanmar military ties, not less. Now he's one of the sponsors of a new sanctions bill.

The Trump administration already has imposed sanctions on the chief of Myanmar's western military command and says it's considering blacklisting others. But the Senate's bipartisan bill, approved Wednesday by the Foreign Relations Committee, would turn the screw by pushing for more targeted sanctions and by reinforcing restrictions on military engagement with Myanmar, also known as Burma.

New policy places mark on a GI's records for harassment

By LOLITA C. BALDOR

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Military members who harass or bully people on the job or online can now be certain of a permanent mark on their service record, according to a new Pentagon policy on harassment.

The policy being announced Thursday pulls together a complicated mix of rules governing sexual harassment, bullying, hazing and other forms of hostile online behavior and workplace discrimination. The goal is to clarify the process for victims filing complaints and make sure that those responsible are held to account for their actions.

The overhaul comes almost a year after an online nude photo sharing scandal rocked the Marine Corps. The ensuring criminal investigation forced leaders across all the military services to create more vigorous social media standards. The scandal showed how difficult it is to track or govern inappropriate behavior by military members in the largely anonymous online universe.

Pentagon officials said consoli-

dating various harassment policies will make it easier for victims to report problems, seek help and see the consequences for offenders. Until now, some members of the military who engaged in such actions could face punishment but then see any mention of the infractions expunged from their records.

The military services will have 60 days to develop plans to put in place the policy.

"We have a sexual harassment policy, we have a memo that clarifies response and reporting of sexual harassment, we have regulations on hazing and bullying, we have a policy that covers discriminatory harassment," said Elise Van Winkle, the Pentagon's principal director for force resiliency. "What this does is pull them together to cover all forms of harassment."

An important change involves clearer guidelines on how a military member can report harassment, particularly for troops who may belong to one service but work in a job reporting to another service. Army soldiers, for example, can work at an air base overseas and report to an Air Force

commander. A Navy officer working at U.S. Pacific Command may have airmen or Marines on staff.

The new policy will allow troops to file harassment complaints wherever they feel most comfortable, though their own service would provide them assistance. An alleged offender probably would go through the justice system. If found guilty, he or she would face punishment from his or her own service.

Standardizing the rules "helps increase the effectiveness of these policies when we deploy them to the field," Van Winkle said.

She said the services will have to set up 24-hour hot lines for harassment questions and complaints. Most services have hot lines for sexual harassment, but this expands the requirement to all forms of bad conduct.

"We owe our servicemembers every protection we can give them," said Robert Wilkie, defense undersecretary for personnel. "While this policy is not perfect, it is a critical milestone in the department's efforts to eliminate harassment and fully prepare the entire force to protect the nation."

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PACIFIC

At Yokota, Pence blasts N. Korea, lauds US forces

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Vice President Mike Pence slammed North Korea for human rights abuses and touted American military strength during a speech to troops Thursday at the home of U.S. Forces Japan and the 5th Air Force in western Tokyo.

Flanked by a pair of F-35 Lightning II stealth fighters inside one of Yokota's massive hangars, Pence got a warm welcome to the stage from U.S. Forces Japan commander Lt. Gen. Jerry Martinez and 37th Airlift Wing commander Col. Kenneth Moss. A day earlier, after meeting Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the vice president had warned that "the toughest and most aggressive round of economic sanc-

tions" soon would be imposed on North Korea.

On Thursday, standing in the same spot where President Donald Trump spoke to servicemembers in November, Pence blasted Pyongyang's treatment of its own people.

"As we speak, an estimated 100,000 North Korean citizens labor in modern-day gulags," he said. "Those who dare raise their voices in dissent are imprisoned, tortured and even murdered, and their children and grandchildren routinely punished for their family's sins against the state."

Pence said Yokota's servicemembers are part of a long line of warriors who have sacrificed for freedom in the region. He told them about a young 45th Infantry Division officer who was awarded a Bronze Star in the Korean War.

"He's been gone now almost as long as I had the chance to know him, but that medal sits on my desk in the West Wing of the White House and bears the name of [2nd] Lt. Edward J. Pence, my dad," he said.

Yokota is a "citadel of strength," said Pence, who toured operations centers at the base where personnel keep tabs on North Korean military moves. U.S. and Japanese troops gathered there represent the greatest concentration of combined military might anywhere in the world, he added.

"All across these lands and skies, America's matchless strength is on display every day," he said.

He cited the Yokosuka-based USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier and supporting ships, forward-deployed F-18 and F-35B fighters, and submarines as



LEON COOK/Stars and Stripes

Vice President Mike Pence speaks to U.S. and Japanese troops Thursday at Yokota Air Base, Japan.

assets that are "positioned to respond to dangers and threats with overwhelming force."

A Nuclear Posture Review will make American forces more flexible to deter any strategic attack on the U.S. or its allies and will make the world's strongest military even stronger, he said.

"Thanks to the president's leadership and bipartisan support in the U.S. Senate, Congress has passed a two-year budget deal that includes the largest investment

in our national defense since the days of Ronald Reagan," he said.

The budget adds \$80 billion to defense spending, including the largest pay increase for servicemembers in eight years, Pence added.

After his speech, Pence traveled to South Korea, where he is scheduled to attend opening ceremonies for the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics on Friday.

robson.seth@stripes.com
Twitter: @SethRobson

VP's Olympics visit targets N. Korea's 'charm offensive'

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — On his way to the Olympics, Vice President Mike Pence struck the U.S.' usual hard line against North Korea with vows to increase sanctions and warnings that "all options are on the table."

But he added a human element to his talking points, in line with the Trump administration's recent focus on the North's human rights abuses to counter what critics have dubbed the nuclear-armored state's "charm offensive" during the Winter Games.

That was highlighted with the iconic image of a North Korean defector hoisting his wooden crutches during President Donald Trump's State of the Union speech.

"Together with our allies and partners, we will continue to strive to peacefully dismantle North Korea's nuclear program and alleviate the suffering of its people," Pence told U.S. troops in Japan before traveling to South Korea on Thursday.

The vice president also was bringing as his special guest to the Olympics Frank Warmbier, the father of a University of Virginia student who died after being released from North Korean captivity last year.

And he was expected to meet with North Korean defectors and to visit a South Korean naval vessel that has widely believed to have been sunk by a North Korean torpedo in 2010, killing nearly 50 sailors.

Experts say the effort to cast a spotlight on the North's brutal treatment of many of its people is a powerful tool because the leadership is extremely sensitive on the subject, but it's unclear if the administration is trying to set the stage for military action or simply to increase the pressure on the regime over its nuclear weapons program.

Pence's harsh rhetoric was in stark contrast to the images coming from Olympic venues in Pyeongchang, where North Korean athletes received applause during practices and North Korean artists and cheerleaders arrived wearing matching coats, fur stoles and hats. About 150,000 people applied for a chance to see a perfor-



MARCUS FIGHT/Stars and Stripes

Vice President Mike Pence and his wife, Karen, wave Thursday after landing at Osan Air Base, South Korea.

mance by a popular North Korean group.

The two Koreas agreed to march together under a unified flag during Friday's opening ceremony and to compete in a combined women's hockey team after a flurry of sports diplomacy that followed North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's New Year's address.

"North Korea is trying to send a message to the international community that North Korea is a normal country, not a rogue nation," said Kang Cheol Hwan, a North Korean defector and human rights advocate. "I think the U.S. seems to have a goal of separating Kim Jong Un from the North Koreans, so the U.S. government is trying to show that they'll protect North Koreans even though they want the North Korean regime to collapse."

Trump publicly has supported South Korea's efforts to host a successful Olympics, but officials also said the White House sees Pence's visit as an opportunity to make sure the North Koreans don't "hijack" the games with a public relations bonanza.

Many officials believe the North is trying to use the Olympics to boost its image in a bid to whittle away at international condemnation and punishing economic measures following a series of missile and nuclear tests last year.

Pence himself tweeted on the eve of his trip that he was headed to the region to "reiterate our commitment to continue to isolate N Korea & ensure N Korea doesn't use the Olympics to paper over the truth about their regime which oppresses its own people & threatens other nations."

Longtime allies Seoul and Washington have insisted they're united in support for the North Korean participation in the games, and diplomats have been working overtime to make sure they're on the same page with regard to exceptions required to overcome stiff sanctions intended to cripple the communist state.

But Pence's harsh rhetoric has drawn criticism. One South Korean newspaper decried it as poor sportsmanship.

"North Korea is clearly in the wrong, and no excuses can be made for it. Nevertheless, there is a time and place for everything," the Hankyoreh newspaper said Thursday in an editorial. "Showing up at someone else's party and picking a fight with one of their guests betrays a complete lack of respect for the host."

Rights groups also say North Korea is one of the world's worst human-rights abusers, with more than 100,000 political prisoners believed to be in gulag-style camps, arbitrary detentions, severe re-

strictions on freedom of expression and laborers sent overseas to earn hard currency for the regime.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, meanwhile, pressed on with his efforts to use the Olympics détente to promote broader dialogue with all sides after months of heightened tensions.

His office announced he will hold a luncheon Saturday for the North Korean leader's sister, Kim Yo Jong, and other senior officials leading the delegation to the South for the Olympics.

Pence has left the door open for a possible meeting with the North Koreans but said he hasn't requested one and any engagement would include his ultimate message that the North must abandon its nuclear ambitions, an issue Pyongyang insists is not up for negotiation.

David Straub, a former State Department Korean affairs director who is currently a visiting fellow at South Korea's Sejong Institute, said he believes the U.S. is using human rights to increase diplomatic pressure.

"There's some speculation that maybe this is the U.S. trying to demonize North Korea and the North Korean regime in the run-up to the possible use of a military option against North Korea," he said in a telephone interview.


"I think it's much more likely that this is simply another way the Trump admin is trying to apply pressure on North Korea as part of their maximum pressure and engagement policy," he said.

Underlining the growing threat, North Korea held a military parade and rally on the main square in Pyongyang on the eve of the opening ceremony. Kim Jong Un walked on a red carpet with his wife at the beginning of the event, which was broadcast on state-run television hours after it ended.

The parade had been widely expected after the North said it would hold a big event to mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of its military and commercial satellite images showed preparations underway.

Stars and Stripes reporter Yoo Kyong Chang contributed to this report.
kim.gamel@stripes.com
Twitter: @kimgamel

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OSAN AB



EUROPE

Marine gear stored in cold caves in Hell

Norway stashes ready if needed

By MARTIN EGNASH
Stars and Stripes

HELL, Norway — The giant caves in these fjordside mountains pack enough firepower for 4,600 U.S. Marines and are built to withstand the first few days of a hypothetical World War III.

The several hundred feet of rock would most likely protect the hidden weapons stashes from a nuclear missile attack.

This stockpile of armor and guns — managed by Marines living near a frozen town named Hell — isn't the scene of a post-apocalyptic action movie or the next sequel to the "Fallout" video games.

The cave system here is part of the Marine Corps program to store vital equipment in areas of strategic interest.

The Marine Corps Pre-Positioning-Norway caves began in the mid-1980s, during the height of the Cold War. Ever since then, the Marines have periodically moved heavy equipment into the area.

"The first time you see one of these caves, it's pretty wild," said program spokesman Maj. Thomas Stona. "It is pretty (science fiction-like). But the warehouses to hold this much equipment would be massive, so using 'in-rock' facilities like this actually makes a lot of sense. Once you blow the hole into the ground, these caves essentially last forever."

The caverns of combat gear, which only a few years ago could have been regarded as a relic of the Cold War, have taken on new strategic significance because of concerns about a more aggressive Russia.

In 2016, the Corps reached an agreement with Norway to host rotational Marines in six-month increments.

Having the equipment in Norway cuts down on response time for any type of emergency contingency, Stona said.

"If the balloon was to go up, or we wanted to deter a force somewhere, it would take weeks for this equipment to move here from Camp Lejeune (N.C.)," he said. "But it's already at or near its intended point of use, so all that would need to happen is for Marines to fly over from Lejeune, which they can do pretty quickly, and deploy on this equipment."

Inside the caves are rows filled with items like LAV-25 armored vehicles, M1A1 Abrams tanks, 155mm Howitzers and cold-weather gear.

The equipment inside the caves represents a whole cross section of everything the Marine Corps has," Stona said.

The caves contain enough food and bullets to stand up a Marine expeditionary brigade and support them for several weeks of combat.

"This program is how Marines



PHOTOS BY MARTIN EGNASH/Stars and Stripes

Marine LAV-25s are stored inside one of the Marine Corps Pre-Positioning Norway caves in the Trondelag region of northern Norway.



Marines are shown the inside of one of the caves on Feb. 2.

go to war," pre-positioning officer Lyle Layher said.

During peacetime, the gear is available for Marines around the world to use for training.

"The purpose of the sites is not for training, but having the equipment here saves a lot of money and time that would otherwise be spent transporting equipment from the United States," Stona said.

There are six caves the Marines use for pre-positioning equipment in Norway. Each was blasted into a mountain in the Trondelag region by the Norwegian military.

"When the program began, the Cold War was still on," Stona said. "Russia being a nuclear-capable adversary, the idea was to provide an area capable of withstanding a nuclear strike."

Norway still pays half the cost

of maintaining the equipment inside the caves, which makes it cheaper for the U.S. to store equipment here than it would be back home, Stona said.

"This program is a tangible part of the relationship between the Marines and the Norwegian military," he said. "It's a symbiotic relationship. They get a U.S. presence in their country and we get a reduced cost of storing



Norwegian army Lt. Frode Gipling shows Marines the bare rock of one of the caves used for the Marine Corps Pre-Positioning Norway program.

equipment."

For the Marines who work in the caves or withdraw equipment from them, the experience is like no other.

"The caves are one of the coolest things I've ever seen," said one of the Marines who had set eyes on the tunnels for the first time.

The vast amount of equipment and facilities inside the caves left even more Marines awestruck.

"It's neat, orderly and structured with discipline ... It's a real mechanic's dream," Marine Sgt. Peter Goodwin Jr. said.

egnash.martin@stripes.com
Twitter: @Marty_Stripes

WAR ON TERRORISM

US adds air power, intel gathering in Afghanistan

By ROBERT BURNS
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. is shifting combat and intelligence-gathering aircraft to Afghanistan as part of an intensified focus on the Taliban, now that the campaign against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria is winding down, the commander of coalition air forces in Afghanistan said Wednesday.

Air Force Maj. Gen. James Hecker told reporters at the Pentagon in a video teleconference from Kabul that on Feb. 1 the

U.S. Central Command officially designated Afghanistan as its “main effort,” supplanting the counter-Islamic State campaign in Iraq and Syria. Central Command is responsible for all U.S. military operations in the broader Middle East as well as Central Asia.

Hecker emphasized the importance of increased support from U.S. intelligence agencies, whose analysis and expertise help the military identify targets to strike.

“This behind-the-scenes legwork allows us to hit the Taliban where it hurts most, whether it’s command-and-control ... or

their pocketbooks,” Hecker said.

He said the U.S. now has 50 percent more MQ-9 Reaper drones than last year providing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance in Afghanistan.

He said the U.S. also has added A-10 attack planes and will be adding combat search-and-rescue aircraft.

Even as the U.S. adds air power, the size and capabilities of the Afghan air force are growing, Hecker said. The Afghans are now conducting more strike missions than the Americans, he said.

“We are putting unrelenting pressure on

the enemy these days,” Hecker said, with a goal of compelling the Taliban to reconcile with the government. That goal has been pursued by U.S. commanders in Afghanistan for much of the past 16-plus years, without success.

Hecker acknowledged that air power alone is unlikely to do the trick.

“You’re not just going to bomb them into submission,” he said. “But it is another pressure point that we can put on them” in addition to ground combat operations led by the Afghan army and special operations forces.

Combat: US troops may be more hands-on in Afghanistan

FROM FRONT PAGE

Turner, meeting last week with a small group of reporters at the Pentagon, said his forces saw indirect enemy fire about 20 times over several months, significantly less often than U.S. units deployed to Helmand had experienced in the past. As first reported by Marine Corps Times, none of the Marines in the task force earned the Combat Action Ribbon, a culturally important award in the service that recognizes those “who have actively participated in ground or surface combat,” including facing firefights and roadside bomb explosions.

Turner said it is “too simplistic” to say that the Marines hadn’t been in combat just because nobody earned the ribbon, and that the conversation about it has been frustrating. But he added that in Helmand, he and other commanders didn’t see a need to directly maneuver alongside Afghan troops after Washington added that as a possibility.

“They were doing it themselves, and they were willing to do it,” Turner said of the Afghan troops. “It’s their country, and they were willing and able to take the fight to the enemy. With our ability to enable them, they were ready to go.”

That stands in contrast to what a new conventional Army unit at the center of the administration’s strategy in Afghanistan is training to do when it deploys this spring. The 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade, a newly formed unit of about 500 Army advisers with several hundred more soldiers deploying to provide security, has been training for months to advise at the kandak level and accompany Afghan troops on combat operations.

“We’ve been able to communicate to our team that although Afghan tools are first, and Afghan solutions are first, a lot of times that trust is built on the front lines, shoulder to shoulder with them,” said Capt. James Gaffney, a team leader in the brigade. “It’s not doing it for them but demonstrating shared risk.”



SEAN J. BERRY/Courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps

A U.S. Marine with Task Force Southwest 18.1 greets local children during a security patrol near Bost Airfield, Afghanistan, on Jan. 16.



LUCAS HOPKINS/Courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps

Afghan National Army Brig. Gen. Ahmadzai, left, and U.S. Marine Brig. Gen. Roger Turner, center, discuss offensive strategy during an advisory meeting at Camp Hanson, Afghanistan, on June 13.

Pre-deployment training has put the U.S. soldiers through scenarios in which both they and the Afghan troops they are advising are notionally ambushed and killed. The training includes responding after suffering a casualty and calling in medical evacuation.

U.S. commanders are wary of explaining how they plan to use the new Army adviser unit, citing operational security. It also isn’t clear if the next rotation of Marines in Helmand may be more aggressive. Brig. Gen. Benjamin Watson, the new commander of

Task Force Southwest, left open the possibility in an interview last month with Task & Purpose.

Turner, asked about the Army advisers’ training, said that he thinks it is probably smart to have the brigade “train to the limits of the way they might be employed.” Then, once they are in Afghanistan, commanders can decide how to use them, he said.

Where that goes now is unclear, but American troops are often inclined to do as much as they can within the directives their senior commanders dictate.

US, Afghan strikes target militants in northern province

By AMIR SHAH
AND KATHY GANNON
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Joint U.S. and Afghan air raids targeted Islamic State in Afghanistan’s northern Jowzjan province, while in northeastern Badkshan province, U.S. fighter jets pounded Taliban camps that were providing support to militant Turkic Muslim Uighurs who seek independence from China, a U.S.-led coalition statement said Thursday.

Taliban militants in the camps were plotting attacks inside Afghanistan as well as aiding the militants of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement operating along the border with China and Tajikistan, the statement said.

Gen. John Nicholson, commander of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, said in the statement: “There will be no safe haven for any terrorist group ... We continue to hunt them across the country.”

Meanwhile, Jowzjan police chief Faqir Mohammad Jowzjani told The Associated Press that a Chinese and three Uzbek militants were killed in the joint airstrikes.

Jowzjan province, where the ISIS affiliate has gained a foothold.

Jowzjani said ISIS has become prominent in Darzab district, where the airstrikes took place, and also in the Kuch Tepa district of Jowzjan province.

ISIS emerged in Afghanistan in 2014, mostly from the ranks of disgruntled Taliban, and in the initial years restricted its activities to the country’s east, mostly Nangarhar province.

However, seeking to expand their presence, the ISIS affiliate in Afghanistan — which goes under the name of Khurasan — stepped up attacks and claimed responsibility for several horrific suicide bombings that targeted Shiite Muslim places of worship in the capital Kabul and in western Herat province. The radical Sunni militant group reviles Shiites as heretics.

Analysts who track ISIS say there are now as many as 5,000 ISIS fighters in northern Afghani-

‘There will be no safe haven for any terrorist group. ... We continue to hunt them across the country.’

Gen. John Nicholson
commander of U.S. Forces in
Afghanistan

stan, most of them Uzbek nationals who are former members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan militant group.

Jowzjani, the provincial police chief, said several Uzbek members of ISIS have settled in the north of Afghanistan with their families.

The region is ethnically dominated by Afghan Tajiks and Uzbeks, with enclaves of ethnic Pashtuns and also ethnic Hazaras. The Pashtuns live mostly in the country’s east and south, and the Hazaras dominate swaths of central Afghanistan.

In targeting the infrastructure of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, whose goal is independence for China’s northwest Uighur dominated area, the American military statement said the U.S. strikes should be a comfort to Afghanistan’s neighbors.

Saying the Uigher-dominated terrorist group, “poses a threat to China and enjoys support from the Taliban in Badkshan and throughout the border region,” the U.S. military statement noted that “the U.S. strikes support Afghanistan in reassuring its neighbors that it is not a safe sanctuary for terrorists who want to carry out cross border operations.”

Extremists from the Turkic Muslim Uighur ethnic group native to northwestern China’s Xinjiang province have been operating in Afghanistan and in the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

WAR ON TERRORISM

Strike: Coalition, Russians in contact during Syrians' attack

FROM FRONT PAGE

Friction was reported previously, but Wednesday's incident appeared to be the largest since last year. The ISIS militants have been dispersed in the province, which also has a number of U.S. bases.

In an email Thursday to The Associated Press, Col. Thomas Veale said the coalition reported to the Russians the buildup of the pro-government forces in the area before the attack and communicated with them during and after it. The Russian officials offered assurances that they would not engage the coalition forces in the area, Veale said.

"Pro-regime forces initiated hostilities with artillery pieces (howitzers). Additionally, Syrian pro-regime forces maneuvered T-55 and T-72 main battle tanks with supporting mortar fire in what appears to be a coordinated attack on Syrian Democratic Forces approximately 5 miles east of the Euphrates River de-confliction line in Khusham, Syria," Veale said.

By crossing the river, the pro-government forces would have violated the existing de-confliction agreement between Washington and Moscow, approaching U.S.-backed forces based near an oil field in the area. Russia is the main ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Asked if Russia was responsible for not stopping the attack, Veale said, "The de-confliction effort has served its purpose. Just as the coalition does not direct the operations of the SDF, the Russians do not direct operations of the Syrian regime."

Veale said they suspect the Syrian pro-government forces were trying to seize terrain from the U.S.-backed forces liberated from ISIS militants last year, including major oil fields in the area.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the U.S. airstrike wounded 25 pro-Syrian volunteers. It alleged that the incident showed that Washington was not interested

in fighting Islamic militants but wanted "to seize and hold Syrian economic assets."

Syria's state media said the coalition bombed government-backed troops in Khusham, describing them as tribal fighters. The media cited reports of dozens killed and wounded.

The official state news agency SANA said the local fighters were battling ISIS militants and the U.S.-backed SDF in the area.

SANA labeled it an "aggression" and a "new massacre."

The head of the SDF unit in the area, Ahmed Abu Khawla, told the AP the attackers were government-backed local militias known as the National Defense Forces. He said they started the attack near oil fields on the east side of the Euphrates.

"It was a little bit stronger than the usual clashes in the area. Everyone is back to their bases," said Abu Khawla, the head of the Deir el-Zour Military Council. "It is now normal."

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the war, said Deir el-Zour province continues to be tense following the foiled attack and the U.S. response and that there were reports of a new mobilization to the area.

The Observatory, which relies on a network of activists in Syria, said the Khusham area, near one of the province's largest oil fields, saw intense clashes with heavy weaponry late Wednesday between pro-Assad forces and the SDF.

The clashes prompted the coalition response with land-to-land missiles and airstrikes, the Observatory said. It added that at least 45 pro-government troops, including Arab and Asian fighters, were killed.

Last summer, the coalition shot down Iran-made armed drones and aircraft affiliated with the Syrian government in southern Syria after they came dangerously close to U.S.-backed forces and advisers.

2 Afghan generals fired, to be tried in academy assault

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Two Afghan generals and five other army officers have been fired and charged with negligence in connection with last week's deadly assault on a military academy in which 11 soldiers were killed, the Defense Ministry said Wednesday.

A ministry spokesman Daulat Waziri told The Associated Press that the seven officers will be tried in a military court. He did not offer further details.

Afghanistan's Islamic State affiliate claimed the Jan. 29 attack in Kabul, which also wounded 16 soldiers. A suicide bomber struck the military unit guarding the

academy, which set off a gunbattle. Two attackers were killed in the fighting, two blew themselves up and one was arrested.

Separately, Interior Ministry spokesman Najib Danish said five civilians have been arrested in connection with a Jan. 21 assault on the Intercontinental Hotel, which killed 44 people including several foreigners, and a Jan. 27 suicide bombing that killed 103 people.

The suicide bombing occurred in an area known as the Green Zone, which signposts proclaim is protected by "a ring of steel." The explosives were concealed in an ambulance that was able to slip past a security checkpoint.



RAHIMAT GUL/AP

An injured man arrives at a hospital Jan. 27 following a suicide attack in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Experts: al-Qaida tops ISIS as threat in some regions

By EDITH M. LEDERER

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Al-Qaida's global network remains "remarkably resilient" and poses a greater threat than Islamic State in several regions, including Yemen and Somalia, U.N. experts say.

The panel of experts monitoring sanctions against both groups said in a report to the U.N. Security Council, obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press, that al-Qaida affiliates also "remain a threat at least as serious" as ISIS in West Africa and South Asia.

In a separate report circulated Tuesday, U.N. experts said ISIS poses "a significant and evolving threat around the world" despite recent setbacks in Iraq, Syria and the southern Philippines that forced the militants to relinquish strongholds.

The new report said unidentified U.N. member states highlighted that some al-Qaida and ISIS members "have been willing and able to support each other in the preparation of attacks," which poses "a potential new threat" in some regions.

In addition, al-Qaida propaganda continues to highlight a new generation of potential leaders, such as Hamza bin Laden ... in an apparent attempt to project a younger image to its sympathizers," the experts said.

Bin Laden is the son of Osama bin Laden, who masterminded the al-Qaida terrorist attack on the U.S. on Sept. 11, 2001, that killed nearly 3,000 people and injured more than 6,000. He called on Muslims around the world in an audio message in November to avenge his father's killing in 2011 by U.S. Navy SEALs.

In Syria, the experts said some unnamed governments also highlighted that the Nusra Front "remains one of the strongest and largest" al-Qaida affiliates globally. It aims to absorb smaller groups in Syria, though some members argue that the Nusra Front should have "a more international outlook" and not concentrate only on Syria, they said.

The Nusra Front remains the dominant force in the al-Qaida-linked Hay'at Tahrir al Sham coalition — Arabic for Levant Liberation Committee, also known as HTS — with between 7,000 and 11,000 fighters, including several thousand foreigners, the experts said.

The group is entrenched and is able to make money in its stronghold in Idlib province, they said. But since the report was written, Idlib has come under intense attack by Syrian government forces.

According to the assessment of U.N. member states, the experts said al-Qaida also "remains a serious threat within the Arabian peninsula," plotting attacks in the wider Middle East as well, including a July 2017 plot targeting Jordan that was planned in Yemen and disrupted.

The experts said al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula is playing a leading role in al-Qaida's propaganda and communications activities.

In West Africa, the experts said member states highlighted that the threat from groups related to al-Qaida and ISIS continues to spread through Mali as well as neighboring countries.

During the course of 2017, they said, most "terrorist entities" operating in the Sahel region established formal links with either

ISIS or al-Qaida. "However, to date, no rivalry between the various groups has been observed," the experts said.

In East Africa, they said the al-Qaida affiliate al-Shabab "remains resilient and has sustained its dominance" over ISIS affiliates in Somalia and posed a greater threat to the U.N.-African Union peacekeeping force in the country.

In 2017, al-Shabab pursued its goal of establishing a presence beyond Somalia and conducted operations seeking to set up bases in Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti," the experts said.

In Afghanistan, the experts said, unnamed governments highlighted an increase in opposition fighters, estimating there could be as many as 60,000 fighters loyal to the Taliban combined with members of various al-Qaida-affiliated groups.

There are more than 20 groups active in the country, with the Taliban the largest at about 40,000 to 45,000 fighters, the experts said.

In South Asia, al-Qaida affiliates and ISIS extremists are taking advantage of "the volatile security situation in Afghanistan," the experts said.

Losses by ISIS militants in Iraq and Syria also are raising "the threat to Southeast Asia, as its funds and fighters are scattered around the world," the report said. The region has seen "a marked increase in terrorist attacks" in recent years, with at least 10 ISIS-inspired attacks in Indonesia alone in the first half of 2017, it said.

Since ISIS lost its strongholds, its propaganda machinery "is further decentralizing and the quality of its material continues to decline," the experts said.

NATION



SUSAN WALSH/AP

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., is shown on television Wednesday as she speaks from the House floor on Capitol Hill in Washington as a news conference that she was supposed to attend goes on in the background.

Pelosi speaks for record 8 hours in favor of 'Dreamers'

By STEVE PEOPLES
AND ALAN FRAM
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi staged a record-breaking, eight-hour speech in hopes of pressuring Republicans to allow a vote on protecting "Dreamer" immigrants — and to demonstrate to increasingly angry progressives and Democratic activists that she has done all she could.

Wearing 4-inch heels and forgoing any breaks, Pelosi, 77, spent much of the rare talkathon Wednesday reading personal letters from the young immigrants whose temporary protection from deportation is set to expire next month. The California Democrat quoted from the Bible and Pope Francis as Democrats took turns sitting behind her in support. The Office of the House Historian said it was the longest continuous speech in the chamber on record.

"You see, these people are being deported," Pelosi said about hour six. "We can do something

today to at least make whole the children."

Her remarks seemed partly aimed at the liberal wing of Pelosi's own party, who seethed as Senate Democrats cut a budget deal with Republicans that quickly could steal the momentum behind the effort to resolve the Dreamers' plight.

The wide-ranging budget accord says nothing about renewing the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, called DACA, which temporarily shields Dreamers — hundreds of thousands of immigrants brought to the country as children and living here illegally — from deportation. President Donald Trump has moved to annul DACA.

Pelosi said she'd oppose the budget deal unless GOP leaders agreed to hold a House vote on helping the Dreamers. But top Democrats said they weren't corraling rank-and-file lawmakers to oppose the budget pact, leading some of the party's immigration advocates to question the forcefulness of her opposition.

"I'm going to take everything she says at face value," said Rep. Luis Guterrez, D-Ill. "And then, hopefully, tomorrow she will validate that trust by stopping us from voting for it. If she doesn't, then it was a nice speech."

Pelosi's performance had no immediate impact on Republican leaders, who have not scheduled a vote on the issue. AshLee Strong, spokeswoman for House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said Ryan "has already repeatedly stated we intend to do a DACA and immigration reform bill — one that the president supports."

While Pelosi spoke, immigration activists rallied in Washington and threatened retribution against the congressional Democrats who abandoned the strategy of demanding that a budget accord be paired with an immigration deal. The fresh threats exposed deepening divisions within a Democratic Party struggling to address a liberal priority in Republican-controlled Washington.

By TONY CAPACCIO
Bloomberg

President Donald Trump's fiscal 2019 budget will request 24 Super Hornet jets built by Boeing, reversing an Obama administration decision to stop buying the fighter after this year, according to two people familiar with the decision.

The Navy has argued that it needs more of the planes designed F/A-18E/F to fill a shortage in its inventory until more of Lockheed Martin's newer F-35s are deployed. Before Trump even took office,

he'd promoted the Super Hornet as a less costly alternative to the F-35, though the two planes have different capabilities.

The proposal in the budget due to be presented Feb. 12 is likely to be welcomed in Congress, which consistently has added more Super Hornets than requested and resisted Pentagon plans under former President Barack Obama to phase it out. Lawmakers approved 12 of the aircraft in fiscal 2016 when none was requested and 12 more in fiscal 2017 when two were requested. This fiscal year, House and Sen-

ate appropriators have proposed adding 10 aircraft to the 14 requested.

If Boeing "can get the cash for this, it's very good news" because 24 aircraft per year is the minimum economic production rate to keep Boeing's plant in St. Louis operating, Richard Aboulafia, military aircraft analyst for the Teal Group, said in an email. Boeing also is working with the Kuwaiti government to build more as 32 F/A-18s for Kuwait during the next few years.

"The big question is: How long will the Navy sustain the line?" Aboulafia said.

Senate budget deal faces foes in both parties

By ANDREW TAYLOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers agreed to enact a massive budget deal Thursday along with a temporary funding measure to prevent a government shutdown at midnight. GOP leaders moved to shore up support among conservatives for a plan to shelve the Pentagon and domestic programs with an extra \$300 billion during the next two years.

"It's going to need bipartisan support. We are going to deliver our share of support," House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., told conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt on Thursday morning. "I feel very good about Republicans. Our members who are focused on the military are very happy where we landed with that."

The measure was a triumph for Republican allies of the Pentagon and for Democrats seeking more spending on infrastructure and fighting opioid abuse. But it represented a bitter defeat for many liberal Democrats who sought to use the party's leverage on the budget to resolve the plight of immigrant "Dreamers" who face deportation after being brought to the U.S. illegally as children. The deal does not address immigration. And some party Republicans shredded the measure as a budget-buster.

Beyond the \$300 billion figure, the agreement adds \$89 billion in overdue disaster aid for hurricane-slammed Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico, a politically charged increase in the government's borrowing cap and a grab bag of health and tax provisions. Cotton growers and dairy farmers would get relief courtesy of the bipartisan leadership of the Senate Appropriations Committee, while popular funding for community health centers would be extended for two years, among myriad health provisions.

"I love bipartisanship, as you

know," said Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz. "But the problem is the only time we discover bipartisanship is when we spend more money."

Senate leaders pressed to approve the measure Thursday and to send it to the House for a confirming vote before the government begins to shut down at midnight. But hurdles remain to avert the second shutdown in a month.

While Senate Democrats celebrated the rare moment of bipartisanship — Minority Leader Chuck Schumer called it a "genuine breakthrough" — progressives and activists blasted them for leaving immigrants in limbo.

The White House backed the deal — despite President Donald Trump's outburst a day earlier that he'd welcome a government shutdown if Democrats didn't accept his immigration-limiting proposals.

Trump himself tweeted that the agreement "is so important for our great Military," and he urged both Republicans and Democrats to support it.

But the plan faced criticism from deficit hawks in his own party.

Combined with the party's December tax cut bill, the burst in military and other spending would put the GOP-controlled government on track for the first \$1 trillion-plus deficits since President Barack Obama's first term. That's when Congress passed massive stimulus legislation to try to stabilize a down-spiraling economy.

"It's too much," said Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa., a fiscal hawk.

The deal contains far more money demanded by Democrats than had seemed possible only weeks ago, including \$30 billion in disaster aid for Florida and Texas. Some veteran Democrats appeared more likely to support the agreement than junior progressives elected in recent years.

"But in the 'here and now,' this is very good news for one of Boeing's most profitable programs."

The people familiar with the budget request asked not to be identified in advance of its release. Lt. Seth Clarke, a Navy spokesman, said in an email, "I can't confirm a specific number" for any aircraft procurement in the coming budget.

The fiscal 2019 request for the Super Hornets will be the largest since fiscal 2012, when the Navy asked for funds to buy 28 of the fighters.

Trump to seek 24 Boeing Super Hornets in budget, reversing Obama

NATION

Closing arguments continue in trial of Baltimore officers

By DAVID MCFADDEN
Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Federal prosecutors and lawyers for one of two Baltimore detectives fighting racketeering and robbery charges have made their closing arguments as a trial winds down in one of the worst U.S. police corruption scandals in recent history.

The high-profile case is not in the hands of a jury quite yet. Defense attorneys for a second detective who has pleaded not guilty will deliver their final arguments later Thursday, and government prosecutors are set for a rebuttal.

During the past 2½ weeks, the jury trial has been dominated by testimony from disgraced ex-detectives who have pleaded guilty to multiple corruption charges and are cooperating with federal authorities in hopes of shaving years off their prison sentences.

They have provided jaw-dropping revelations about their time on a disbanded police unit called the Gun Trace Task Force, an elite Baltimore police squad that once was praised as a group of hard-charging detectives chipping away at the tide of illegal guns on city streets.

From the stand Wednesday afternoon in U.S. District Court in Baltimore, four former detectives have testified that the unit actually was made up of uniformed thugs who broke into homes, stole cash, resold looted narcotics and lied under oath to cover their tracks.

Wearing lockup jumpsuits, the ex-detectives have admitted to everything from armed home invasions to staging fictitious crime scenes and routinely defrauding their department.

Derek Hines, one of the two assistant U.S. attorneys prosecuting the eight indicted Baltimore officers in the task force, reminded jurors Wednesday that nobody is above the law.

"This isn't a case against all police in a case against all police of criminals who happened to hide behind a badge," Hines said dur-

ing closing arguments.

Defense Daniel Hersl's lead defense attorney, William Purpura, is not denying that his client took money — which he described as an act that "embarrassed" the city and the detective's family — but that it didn't rise to charges of robbery or extortion.

He attacked the veracity of the four disgraced detectives who testified for the government, noting that they've admitted to lying for years to juries, judges, law enforcement colleagues and their families.

"They want that 'Get Out of Jail Free' card," Purpura quipped, referring to a feature of the Monopoly board game.

Six out of eight indicted Baltimore detectives have pleaded guilty in the corruption scandal and four have testified for the government. The trial is for Hersl, 48, and Detective Marcus Taylor, who have pleaded not guilty.

In mid-November, a Philadelphia police officer became the ninth law enforcement agent indicted in the federal investigation. Prosecutors allege he conspired with task force member Jamell Rayam to sell heroin and cocaine seized in Baltimore.

Even public defenders, who often question the testimony of police, are shocked by the sordid revelations exposed at the trial, saying there could be a few thousand tainted cases stretching back to 2008. So far, roughly 125 cases involving the eight indicted Baltimore law enforcers have been dropped.

"This was an ongoing criminal enterprise for many years," said Debbie Katz Levi, head of special litigation for Baltimore's Office of the Public Defender. "We don't believe that this was merely a rogue unit, but rather a symbol of a flawed culture in need of serious reform."

Taylor



EVAN VUCCI/AP

White House Staff Secretary Rob Porter, center, hands President Donald Trump a confirmation order for James Mattis as defense secretary on Jan. 20, 2017, in the Oval Office of the White House as White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus, right, watches.

White House aide resigns after allegations of abuse

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — One of President Donald Trump's top White House aides resigned Wednesday following allegations of domestic abuse leveled against him by his two ex-wives.

Staff Secretary Rob Porter said in a written statement that allegations that became public this week are "outrageous" and "simply false." Porter said photos published of his former spouses — in which one appears to have a black eye — were "given to the media nearly 15 years ago and the reality behind them is nowhere close to what is being described."

Porter added in a written statement, "I have been transparent and truthful about these vile claims, but I will not further engage publicly with a coordinated smear campaign." Porter said he will leave the White House after a transition period.

Porter's former wives recount-

ed physical, verbal and emotional abuse they say he subjected them to during their marriages.

Porter's first wife, Colbie Holderness, told the DailyMail.com that Porter choked and punched her during the five years they were husband and wife.

Porter's second wife, Jennifer Willoughby, also described for the DailyMail.com how Porter once dragged her naked and wet from the shower to yell at her. She filed a protective order against him. Stories published online by the DailyMail.com included photos of Holderness with a bruised eye socket that she said she suffered after Porter punched her in the face while on vacation in Italy.

Neither Holderness nor Willoughby could be reached for comment Wednesday. Telephone messages left by The Associated Press were not returned.

Porter, 40, has been credited with working with White House Chief of Staff John Kelly to control the flow of information to

the president. He helped craft Trump's well-received State of the Union address and was credited internally for helping bridge divides in a White House riven by rivalries and for helping more effectively roll out new policy.

The DailyMail.com published a statement from Kelly referring to Porter as a "man of true integrity and honor," adding, "I can't say enough good things about him."

Porter, well-liked throughout the White House, lost internal support once the photos came out. But even then, Kelly was urging him to stay, according to a White House official who spoke on condition of anonymity to convey internal discussions.

Late Wednesday, Kelly released a statement claiming "new allegations" had swayed him.

"I was shocked by the new allegations released today against Rob Porter. There is no place for domestic violence in our society," Kelly said.

Agency shuttered by rodent infestation defends Puerto Rico aid efforts

By BIANCA PADRO OCASIO
Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel

ORLANDO, Fla. — A Puerto Rican government agency that collected supplies for the affected by Hurricane Maria defended its efforts Wednesday, even as it confirmed about 100 boxes of goods were potentially tainted by a rodent infestation.

Carlos Mercader, executive director for the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration office in Kissimmee, said those boxes were only about 10 percent of the total donations the office has accepted since the storm.

Rep. Darren Soto, D-Fla., issued a statement Wednesday saying he was "outraged"

that the supplies were not delivered to the island.

"Puerto Ricans relied on these donations during a time of crisis!" he said. "While we investigate this matter further, we encourage those who have continued donating to reach out to local non-profits working on relief efforts."

Amid the controversy, Mercader issued a statement Wednesday saying the office already had delivered thousands of pounds of supplies to those in need through non-profit organizations and churches.

"From the passage of Hurricane Maria until last week, the Regional Office in Florida functioned as a collection center," he said. Organization Se Levanta Puerto

Rico, CASA and Iglesia Pentecostal, or ASPEN, were among the organizations he said assisted in those deliveries.

Mercader said the office has sent about 10,000 pounds of supplies to Puerto Rico. The contaminated loads left in the office were not sent to the island "because it was decided that they would be donated to the Puerto Rican families displaced in Florida" instead, he said.

On Tuesday, he had said efforts to send the boxes of water, food and other supplies through other organizations were "unsuccessful."

The PRFAA office, Mercader said Wednesday, "doesn't have the budget to fulfill the delivery of supplies to Puerto Rico,"

which is why they opted to collaborate with other organizations for prior deliveries.

Yennifer Alvarez, a spokeswoman for Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rossello, said the agency also determined it would be too costly to partner with United for Puerto Rico, a leading hurricane recovery non-profit formed after Maria, to transport the remaining supplies.

The office in Kissimmee is closed after a recurrent rodent problem that did not originate from the donated meals. Mercader did not specify what condition the affected boxes were in, but he said PRFAA staff would be evaluating which ones were still fit to be distributed.

THE STARS AND STRIPES

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For the troops

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VETERANS

VA worker hired brother for \$1M landscaping job

By EMILY WAX-THIBODEAUX

The Washington Post

When the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Bedford, Mass., spent \$1 million hiring landscapers and ordering rock salt, mulch and crushed stone, one whistleblower in the department found it suspicious that the supplies never showed up.

Turns out they never delivered, and an employee had steered the contract to her brother's landscaping business, according to an investigation by the Office of Special Counsel, an independent federal agency that investigates whistleblower claims.

The employee was also allowed to keep her federal job. She was demoted only one pay grade, despite President Donald

Trump's VA Accountability Act, which allows quick removal of employees who violate standards or break the law in the troubled agency.

Trump has said that since its passage his administration has already removed "more than 1,500 VA employees who failed to give our veterans the care they deserve — and we are hiring talented people who love our vets as much as we do."

The exact number of VA staffers who have been fired is not clear. The White House and the department have different numbers. An email from a department spokesman said, "VA has fired 1,737 people" since Trump signed the law in June. A White House fact sheet puts the number at 1,470.

But one of those people was apparently

not Bedford VA employee Heather Garneau-Harvey, who steered the money for grounds keeping materials to her brother, the OSC report said.

"By allowing an employee who engaged in this conduct to remain with the agency, VA demonstrates a shocking degree of indifference to government ethical standards, procurement regulations, and public integrity," Special Counsel Henry J. Kerner wrote to the president in a recent letter.

Information about the landscaping scheme came to OSC from a persistent whistleblower who led investigators to nearly \$1 million in improperly spent or documented purchases at the Bedford VA.

Garneau-Harvey denied knowledge of her family's ownership of the company to

criminal investigators. But later emails proved her knowledge, the OSC said. Her father, Donald Garneau, was also employed by VA, has resigned.

Helping the financial interest of a family member is a violation of VA and government ethics regulations, the OSC said.

Curt Cashour, press secretary for the Veterans Affairs Department, agreed that the disciplinary action highlighted in this report, "is wholly inappropriate and isn't anywhere close in proportion to the offense that necessitated it. Veterans deserve to know VA will hold employees accountable when the facts demonstrate they have failed to uphold the high standards taxpayers expect from us," he said in an emailed statement.

Vet group targets Dems in midterms

By NIKKI WENTLING

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Concerned Veterans for America, which is part of the Koch conservative political network, initiated a \$1.5 million advertisement campaign Tuesday criticizing Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., for her record on veterans issues. It's the first significant step in the group's multimillion-dollar strategy targeting states where Republicans will challenge Democratic incumbents in the 2018 midterm elections.

The 30-second ad will run online and on television in Wisconsin for three weeks. It criticizes Baldwin for how she handled the 2015 scandal at the Department of Veterans Affairs hospital in Tomah, Wis., where medical providers were found to be over-prescribing opioids. An inspector general's report faulted the hospital for the accidental overdose death of a Marine Corps veteran.

The ad ends by advising watchers to "tell Tammy Baldwin to fight for our veterans" and support the Veterans Community Care and Access Act, bill introduced by Sens. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., and John McCain, R-Ariz., that aims to increase options for veterans' health care outside the VA. The bill has sparked disagreement among the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

The main purpose of these ads, as it was in the past, is to highlight the fact that there are still problems at the VA and secondarily, that there's been specific politicians who have failed to do the right thing," said Dan Caldwell, executive director of Concerned Veterans for America. "Like this specific ad highlighting Tammy Baldwin, we ask that people contact these members who haven't done the right thing



JOE GROENLUS/Stars and Stripes

Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., seen here at a 2015 press conference, is the target of a \$1.5 million advertising campaign funded by Concerned Veterans for America.

and tell them to support policies that will fix long-term, systemic problems in the VA."

Officials with the Koch network told reporters last month at a summit in California that they plan to spend about \$400 million leading up to November's midterm elections. Baldwin is a primary target of billionaires Charles and David Koch.

In October, Koch affiliates purchased ads criticizing Baldwin's position on tax reform. The Center for Responsive Politics, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research group, wrote in November that, at that time, \$3.1 billion in outside spending had been directed against Baldwin, an amount far exceeding spending against the 21 other Democratic senators up for re-election in 2018.

As an issue-advocacy organization, CVA can't campaign for or against any particular candidate, but it can promote legislation and criticize politicians on their positions.

Besides Wisconsin, CVA will focus its efforts on Montana and Ohio, Caldwell said. Democratic Sens. Jon Tester, of Montana, and Sherrod Brown, of Ohio, are up for re-election in November. They're members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

CVA hired a statewide director in Wisconsin late last year to drum up local support. The group has also established statewide staff in Ohio, where CVA is criticizing Brown for attempts to "water down" legislation that speeds up the firing process for VA employees, Caldwell said.

CVA is working with Americans for Prosperity, another organization in the Koch network, to highlight veterans' issues. The group's goal, Caldwell said, is to advance legislation that gives veterans more choices in their health care — a key campaign promise from President Donald Trump. After about a year of negotiations, legislation has stalled in Congress to overhaul the VA Choice program, which allows some veterans to receive medical care in the private sector.

The group has gained more influence under the Trump administration. Trump has placed one of CVA's senior advisers at the Department of Veterans Affairs. CVA is also invited to take part in discussions, along with congressionally chartered veterans service organizations, when White House and VA officials talk about veterans' issues.

wentling.nikki@stripes.com
Twitter: @nikkiwentling

9 lenders put on notice for pressuring veterans

By NIKKI WENTLING

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The U.S. government sent notices to nine lenders this week, warning them that they would be penalized for pressuring veterans into costly home loan refinancing.

The lenders were told they will be kicked out of Ginnie Mae's mortgage program unless they prove they can correct their actions. The notices are part of an effort between Ginnie Mae, formally known as the Government National Mortgage Association, and the Veterans Affairs Department to stop predatory lenders from targeting veterans who use the VA home loan guarantee program.

The occurrence of rapidly and unnecessarily refinancing loans, known as "loan churning," creates costly fees for veterans, lengthens their debt repayment and threatens the overall VA program, said Ginnie Mae Executive Vice President Michael Bright.

"We need to take these lenders who appear to be operating in a way that doesn't make sense and put them into this penalty box," he said.

Ginnie Mae amended its guidelines at the end of January, stating it would be investigating lenders whose actions appear to be out-of-step with other lenders without a logical reason. Regulators said the bad actors accounted for only a handful of lenders.

Removing those outliers is likely to have the effect of lowering borrowing rates for veterans and others who use Ginnie Mae-backed securities by as much as .5 percent, according to Ginnie Mae. Ginnie Mae didn't name the targeted lenders. Bloomberg Politics, citing a source familiar with the matter, reported NewDay Financial, Nations Lending Corp., Freedom Mortgage Corp., LoanDepot.com LLC and Flagstar Bank were among those named.

"We expect issuers receiving these notices to respond quickly, produce a corrective action plan and come into compliance with our program," Bright said.

Because of loan-churning, companies that provide capital for the VA program are increasingly

wary of lenders taking advantage of veterans who use it, Bright said. Penalizing lenders for churning is likely to improve their confidence.

"People who are backing this program are mad at how these loans are performing," Bright said. "When we actually do this, my hope is those people who were skeptical see that Ginnie Mae really means it, and that they come back to the program."

The action could be just the first step in removing predatory lenders that target the VA program, which offers veterans a low-cost mortgage option.

Jeffrey London, director of the VA loan guaranty service, told lawmakers last month that the VA will soon propose rule changes to the program. The regulations could include a requirement for a lender's refinancing proposal to meet a certain tangible net benefit for veterans, as the Federal Housing Administration already compels lenders to prove before refinancing loans that it insures.

But the process to implement new regulations could be lengthy. The VA must adhere to the federal rulemaking process, which includes a public comment period. London didn't say when the VA expected timeline and said only that the VA would propose new regulations sometime in 2018.

Sens. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and Thom Tillis, R-N.C., introduced legislation in January that would allow lawmakers to create a benefit to veterans when refinancing their mortgage.

While reviewing VA data in recent months, Ginnie Mae found a fixed-rate refinance of a VA home loan cost veterans an average \$6,000 in fees. Their average savings were \$90 each month, meaning it would take veterans more than five years to break even on refinancing.

"The American Legion stands with Ginnie Mae and Senators Warren and Tillis as they work to protect veterans from predatory home lending and ensure veterans have an affordable pathway to home ownership," Denise Rohan, national commander of the American Legion, said in a statement.

wentling.nikki@stripes.com
Twitter: @nikkiwentling

NATION

Suit leads to new TSA training

By FELICIA FONSECA
Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. — A wooden box carried an eagle feather and bone whistle, a gourd rattle and a feather fan — items that carry spiritual energy and are used in Native American religious ceremonies.

The man holding the box asked security agents at the San Antonio International Airport to allow him to display the items, so their energy wouldn't be polluted. The agents declined, roughly handling the items and shoving them back in the box, former Native American Church of North America President Sandor Iron Rope alleged.

His lawsuit against the Transportation Security Administration recently was settled, with neither side acknowledging fault and the agency agreeing to better educate its employees about Native American religious items at more than a dozen airports nationwide.

"There was a policy in place designed to provide some protection for us, but they don't have training," Iron Rope said Wednesday.

The TSA did not respond to messages seeking comment.

The Native American Church has multiple chapters around the country and an estimated 250,000 members. The church that formed in 1918 blends Native American beliefs and Christianity but doesn't have formal buildings. Instead, its members meet in teepees for lengthy ceremonies and use peyote as a sacrament.

Its most visible legal battles have been over peyote, a hallucinogenic that only grows naturally in the United States in southern Texas. States had varied laws on Native Americans' use of the cactus until the early 1990s, when a federal law allowed Native Americans who are part of the church to possess peyote.

For anyone else, it's illegal, in



JOYCE MARSHALL, (FORT WORTH, TEXAS) STAR-TELEGRAM/AP

Members of the Native American Church, which settled a lawsuit against the Transportation Security Administration in January, prepare for a prayer meeting in Mirando City, Texas.

the same category as heroin and cocaine.

One of Iron Rope's attorneys, Forrest Tahdoohannahpah, said church members had enough bad experiences to discourage them from air travel. He said Iron Rope had no indication agents believed his ceremonial items were dangerous.

Passengers can do their part by alerting the TSA at least 72 hours in advance to carry-on items that need additional screening and by clearly communicating beliefs, said Richard Bloom, director of terrorism, intelligence and security studies at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Ariz.

Security agents cannot be trained in all religions, but he said they can improve on dealing with the unknown.

"A little bit of sensitivity and respect and really being open to the unique needs of a religious individual can go a long way toward negotiating something that

works for the individual and for the TSA," Bloom said.

As part of the settlement with the Native American Church of North America, the TSA and the plaintiffs will collaborate on a webinar that will be available to agents who work with passengers well ahead of their flights to move items through security.

Those webinars will be shown to TSA employees in Albuquerque and Farmington, N.M.; Durango, Colo.; Great Falls, Mont.; Minot, N.D.; Rapid City and Sioux Falls, S.D.; and San Antonio, Laredo and McAllen, Texas.

Certain TSA employees in Saint Paul, Minn.; Omaha, Neb.; Oklahoma City; Phoenix; and Denver will have to review guidelines for screening Native American religious items.

A fact sheet for travelers with Native American religious items will be published in the next three months, and the church will be able to advise and make recommendations to the TSA.

FBI: No evidence of attack in death of border agent

By CLAUDIA LAUER
Associated Press

DALLAS — FBI officials said the investigation into the November death of a U.S. Border Patrol agent has yielded no evidence that there was a "scuffle, altercation or attack" more than two months after President Donald Trump and others used the suggestion of an attack to promote a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Investigators have conducted more than 650 interviews and involved 37 field offices in their probe but have not found definitive evidence of an attack, the FBI said in a statement Wednesday. The investigation will continue and the reward of up to \$50,000 for information that closes the case will remain.

"To date none of the more than 650 interviews completed, locations searched, or evidence collected so far have produced evidence that would support the existence of a scuffle, altercation, or attack on November 18, 2017," said the news release from the El Paso office of Emmerson Buie, a special agent in charge.

Rogelio Martinez died from injuries he sustained while he and his partner were responding to reports of unknown activity the night of Nov. 18 near Van Horn, Texas, near the Mexico border.

Martinez's partner radioed for help before both agents were airlifted to the hospital, where Martinez, 36, died a few hours later. The partner, who suffered from head injuries — was released from the hospital after several days, but told investigators he could not remember the incident.

The FBI news release Wednesday noted that a dispatcher, who was among the people interviewed by investigators, took the call from the surviving agent. The dispatcher wrote in his log that, "(He) thinks they (both agents) ran into a culvert."

An autopsy report from the El Paso County medical examiner's office released Tuesday night shed little light on what caused the serious injuries that Martinez suffered. The report listed "blunt force trauma" as the cause of death but said the manner of his death was undetermined.

Dr. Janice Diaz-Cavallieri, assistant medical examiner, found Martinez had a skull fracture, a fractured eye socket, multiple rib fractures and a broken collarbone, according to the 11-page report. She found brain hemorrhaging but no other internal injuries.

A Border Patrol union, the National Border Patrol Council, has said the pair was attacked and struck with a rock or rocks. Messages left with representatives of the group were not immediately returned Wednesday.

Trump, Sen. Ted Cruz and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott also have said the two were attacked, with Trump using the incident to renew his call for a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico.

Investigators had looked into tips about several persons of interest including two in New Mexico. While other charges were filed against several individuals, none of those charges is related to Martinez's death, the FBI news release said, adding that they are not "currently a subject in the investigation."

Maryland ending parental rights of rapists who impregnate victims

By BRIAN WITTE
Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — More than 10 years after supporters began pushing for it, a Maryland legislative measure — with unanimous votes in the Senate and House — to enable impregnated rape victims to ask judges to end the parental rights of their rapists.

Supporters credit a growing sense of female empowerment for making the issue a priority.

"I think we were moving in the direction of getting done this year, period, but I think the #MeToo movement certainly helped," said Del. Kathleen Dumais, a Democrat who practices family law.

All 188 seats in the General Assembly, between senators and delegates serve simultaneous four-year terms, are on November's ballot. So is Gov. Larry Hogan, a Republican, who expressed early sup-

port and noted during his State of the State speech last week that he would sign it.

Crafted as an emergency bill, it will take effect with his signature, potentially within days. Both chambers passed identical bills, but they still need to take a final technical vote to send the legislation to the governor's desk. No obstacles are seen to final passage.

The measure will enable a woman who becomes pregnant by her assailant to ask a court to end the attacker's parental rights. The woman must provide "clear and convincing" proof that the man raped her. That is lower than the "beyond a reasonable doubt" threshold needed for criminal convictions, and some civil liberties-minded lawmakers had opposed the idea for years to avoid revoking the rights of people who have not been criminally convicted.

Dumais said the delay in getting the measure approved was partly because there haven't been enough women on the House

and Senate judicial committees. Female lawmakers now comprise 32 percent of Maryland's legislature, ranking 10th in the nation for female participation, and have never held more than 36 percent of the seats, according to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University.

"There were certainly times, that actually seemed like it was the men versus the women on some of these issues, but as I've been on this committee and become more involved in the issues, really what my committee battles with all the time is a balance between victims' rights and due process," said Dumais. She has often worked on domestic violence legislation in her 16 years in the assembly and now serves as vice chair of the House Judiciary Committee.

About 45 states and the District of Columbia limit parental rights of rapists, according to the National Conference of State Legislators, or NCSL. About 30 allow or re-

quire the complete termination of rights. The other states and the District of Columbia deny or restrict some aspect, such as custody or visitation.

Lawmakers came close to approving it last year, but a panel of lawmakers failed to reconcile differences between the House and Senate before that session adjourned. Women made a point of noting that the panel was all-male.

With unanimous votes in both chambers and more than two months left in the 90-day session, there's ample time for the legislative votes needed to put it on Hogan's desk.

Various studies over the last two decades estimate that between 17,000 and 32,000 rape-related pregnancies occur in the United States every year, according to the NCSL. Studies vary widely on the outcome of such pregnancies, according to an analysis of the bill by the Maryland Department of Legislative Services.

WORLD

7 missing in rubble of deadly Taiwan quake

By TAIJING WU
Associated Press

HUALIEN, Taiwan — Rescuers in Taiwan continued their search for survivors in a dangerously tilted building Thursday, more than a day after it was damaged in an earthquake that shook the island's east coast and killed at least 10 people.

The Yunmen Tsuiti building was one of several damaged by late Tuesday's magnitude 6.4 quake. At least four midsize buildings in worst-hit Hualien county leaned at sharp angles, their lowest floors crushed into mangled heaps of concrete, glass, iron and other debris. Firefighters climbed ladders hoisted

against windows to reach people inside apartments.

Residents at temporary shelters set up in Hualien City described the terror of the powerful quake and their immediate worry for loved ones. Chen Chu-rong, 52, said she wasn't home when the quake toppled the walls of her building, but her son was and he had to climb down from their second-floor unit.

"That fear is still there," she said. "I'm still afraid because things kept on falling down."

Taiwan's National Fire Agency said Thursday that 10 people were killed, 272 injured and seven remained unaccounted for. According to Chinese state broadcaster

CCTV, at least three of the dead were tourists from the mainland.

Japan's Foreign Ministry said nine Japanese were among the injured.

Six mainland Chinese were also injured, the Chinese Communist Party-run People's Daily reported.

President Tsai Ing-wen reassured the public every effort would be made to rescue survivors. On her Facebook page, Tsai said she "ordered search and rescue workers not to give up on any opportunity to save people, while keeping their own safety in mind."

At the Yunmen Tsuiti building, clothes and other personal items

were visible on the balconies as the rescue work continued.

Due to the structure's slant, Taiwanese media said, rescuers struggled with dizziness and vomiting during search efforts. The body of a woman identified as a cleaning person was recovered from Yunmen Tsuiti, CCTV reported Thursday. She had been working for one of the families that lived in the building.

The shifting of the buildings was likely caused by soil liquefaction, when the ground loses its solidity under stress such as the shaking of an earthquake. The quake also buckled roads and disrupted electricity and water supplies to thousands of households.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said his country was dispatching a rescue team to help in the search effort.

Taiwan has frequent earthquakes due to its position along the "Ring of Fire," the seismic faults encircling the Pacific Ocean where most of the world's earthquakes occur. A quake two years ago collapsed an apartment complex in southern Taiwan, killing 115 people. Five people involved in the construction of the complex were found guilty of negligence and given prison sentences.

A magnitude 7.6 quake in central Taiwan killed more than 2,300 people in 1999.



Dancing adds to the festive atmosphere at the women's carnival.



Weiberfastnacht opens the final weekend of Germany's carnival season.



Revelers are decked out in colorful costumes for Weiberfastnacht in Mainz, Germany, on Thursday.



Above: A woman celebrating Weiberfastnacht wears a model of Mainz's famous cathedral on her head.

Left: A singer with cheerleaders entertains the crowd on Schillerplatz. Live bands and DJs let the celebrants singing and dancing, keeping them warm.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS
Stars and Stripes

Women's carnival in Germany a true costume party

By MICHAEL ABRAMS
Stars and Stripes

MAINZ, Germany — Sunny skies but near-freezing temperatures greeted the costumed revelers in Mainz on Thursday morning for the Weiberfastnacht — or women's carnival — celebrations.

A couple of thousand people braved the cold to enjoy the fun, which started at 11:11 a.m. at the foot of the Fastnacht fountain on Schillerplatz, a downtown square. Live bands and DJs got the celebrants singing and dancing, keeping them warm.

There were groups of clowns, frogs and ladybugs enjoying the fun, and just about any other crazy, colorful costumes could be seen among the merry-makers.

Weiberfastnacht is a day when the women are in charge of the

festivities and can cut off men's ties without fear of retribution. Men were also out in abundance, albeit without neckwear.

As in the past couple of years, there was heightened security, with the police out in force, a ban on bottles and participants forced to pass through security checkpoints to enter the square.

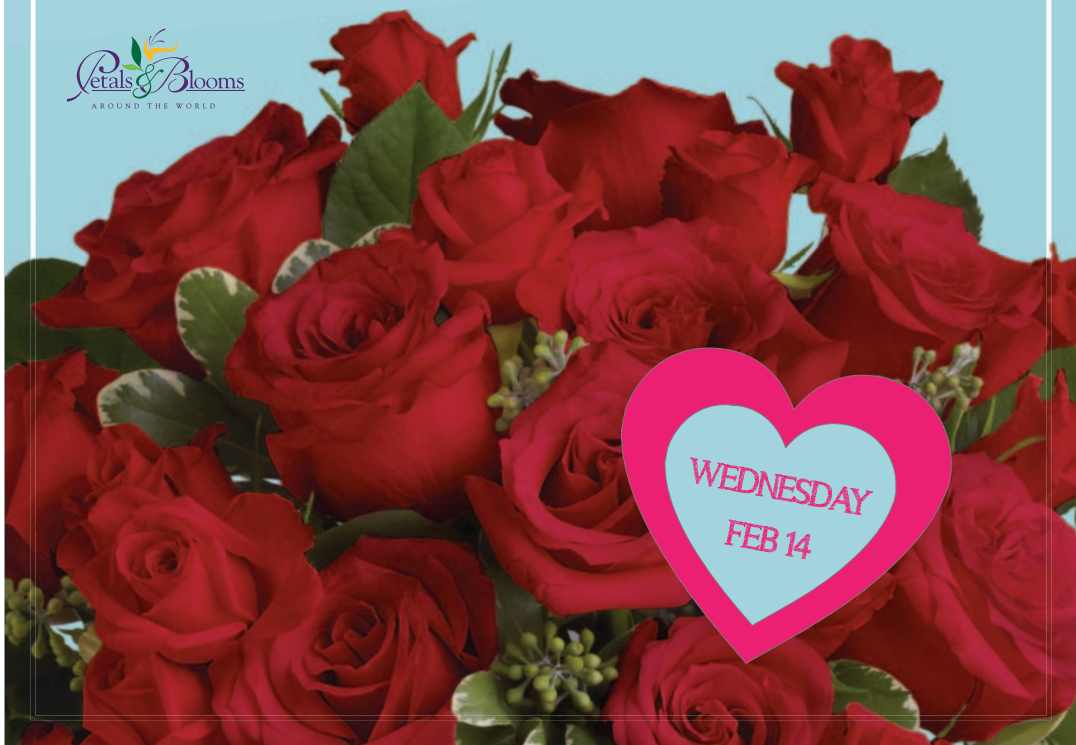
The day traditionally kicks off the final six days of the German carnival season, which culminates in the giant Rose Monday parades in Mainz, Cologne and Duesseldorf that attract more than 1 million spectators. Other popular parades are in Mainz-Kastel on Saturday; in Bitburg, Spangdahlem, Wiesbaden and Frankfurt on Sunday; and in Stuttgart on Tuesday.

abrams.mike@stripes.com
Twitter: @stripes_photog

Several small hearts in pink and light blue are scattered around the top text.

TREAT YOUR Valentine

WITH A PETALS & BLOOMS
FLORAL ARRANGEMENT TODAY!



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Couple inundated with mystery packages

MA ACTON — A Massachusetts couple said it was fun at first when they started receiving free mystery packages from Amazon that they hadn't ordered.

Now they think it's annoying and want it to stop.

Mike and Kelly Gallivan, of Acton, told The Boston Globe the first package arrived in October. Packages have continued to arrive at a rate of one or two a week, about 25 in all.

The Gallivans said Amazon told them the merchandise was paid for with a gift card with no sender's name.

Two experts say the Gallivans are likely unwittingly being used in a ruse to manipulate Amazon buyer reviews. The anonymous sender is likely writing glowing reviews of their own product.

Old extinguisher found in museum crawl space

AK KODIAK — Two Kodiak firefighters made a fitting find at the Baranov Museum.

The firefighters last week found a bullet-ridden copper and brass fire extinguisher — estimated to be at least 100 years old — in the museum's crawl space, the Kodiak Daily Mirror reported.

Firefighters Matt Stone and Dan Farmer were conducting a routine fire safety check when they found the extinguisher.

Museum board members said similar extinguishers were used in bunkers during World War II. Kodiak was a hub during that period. A large naval base was constructed in the 1930s, and by the 1940s more than 25,000 people lived in the village of Kodiak.

Naked man covered in oil attacks family

PA APOLLO — A Pennsylvania man is facing charges after police alleged the 19-year-old attacked his family while tripping on LSD and then resisting arrest while naked and covered in cooking oil.

The Tribune Review said a number of more serious charges including assault and terrorist threats were dropped after the victim refused to pursue charges against him at a preliminary hearing.

Police said Lonnie Beatty had taken the hallucinogen Jan. 16 and lost control, assaulting two female relatives and their children.

When police arrived, they said he was naked, wearing only one sock, and covered in cooking oil.

Woman found holding eyeball outside church

SC ANDERSON — Authorities said a woman was found holding her eyeball outside a South Carolina church.

Anderson County Sheriff Chad McBride told news outlets that it took two or three deputies and two emergency medical workers to subdue the woman to start rendering aid.

THE CENSUS

3 The length in inches of a lizard a Maine woman found in a salad. Michelle Carr, a nurse from Kittery, Maine, who prepared the salad, said she realized after a couple of bites her fork was stuck in a 3-inch lizard, minus the tail. A biologist friend believes she found a blue-bellied lizard from California. Carr said she bought a bag of store-brand romaine lettuce at a supermarket in Portsmouth, N.H., on Jan. 26. The lettuce was distributed by a California company.



PHOTOS BY JOSHUA L. JONES, ATHENS (GA.) BANNER-HERALD/AP

Creepy crawlers

Above: University of Georgia student Kelly Tims, right, shows some local students a Madagascar hissing cockroach during an interactive program showcasing the university's Bug Zoo at the Athens-Clarke County Library in Athens, Ga., on Tuesday. Right: A Honduran curly hair tarantula is held by Brandy Winkler, of the university.



A retired minister who helped the woman, the Rev. Terry Mitchell, said it appeared she had intentionally hurt herself on nearby railroad tracks.

Deputies 'pull over' low-flying balloons

CA YUCAIPA — Sheriff's deputies "pulled over" two hot-air balloons for skimming rooftops in San Bernardino County.

The San Bernardino Sun reported that the Sheriff's Department began receiving calls shortly before 8 a.m. Tuesday about the balloons coming dangerously close to rooftops in Yucaipa and even hitting the tops of trees.

A sheriff's statement said deputies went to the neighborhood, where they saw the balloons flying above a golf course and coming within 5 feet of rooftops.

The deputies got the attention of the pilots and had them land.

Authorities will send a report to the Federal Aviation Administration, which will decide if the pilots violated any air laws.

\$3,000 burger comes with engagement ring

MA BOSTON — For \$3,000, patrons at one Boston restaurant can order a burger that comes with an engagement ring on the side.

Pauli's, in the city's North End, said that with 48 hours' notice, the restaurant's Big Boy burger will arrive with a 7/8 carat Neil Lane ring nestled in the bun. The ring will come framed with round diamonds and a 14k gold band.

The restaurant said the burger is part of a Valentine's Day special.

Restaurant owner Paul Barker said there are no confirmed orders so far, but there are several "very interested" people.

Gender reveal spraying of water irks residents

KY INEZ — Residents in a troubled Kentucky water district have expressed outrage at a local firetruck participating in a gender reveal by spraying blue water.

News outlets report a video showing the gender reveal has lit up social media in Martin County. Inez Volunteer Fire Department Chief Lee Gauze said one of his firefighters paid \$6.70 for 1,000 gallons of water for the celebration anticipating his son's birth.

Several posts in the Facebook group "Martin County Water Warriors" criticized the timing as residents continue to rely on bottled water for everyday needs.

The district blamed problems on a decrease in customers and a corresponding loss in revenue for infrastructure repairs and proposed a 49.5 percent rate increase.

Teen makes false 911 call for stuck cat

TN OOLTEWAH — Authorities said a Tennessee teen whose cat was stuck in a tree falsely reported a fire to attract help.

Hamilton County 911 Center's director of operations, Jeff Carney, told WRCP-TV that multiple agencies responded Monday to what they thought was a fire at

Trevor Austin Lane's home.

According to Lane's arrest report, his cat had been stuck in the tree since Sunday night and he figured the fire department's "big ladders" would be of use. He was charged with a 911 violation and jailed on \$1,500 bond.

Lack of time, money cancels Tall Ships fest

SC CHARLESTON — There will be no Tall Ships Charleston festival this year.

The Post and Courier of Charleston reported organizers ran out of time and money.

This year's event had been planned in May.

Tall Ships America executive director Bert Rogers said organizers were unable to get enough money in time to attract enough ships. Rogers said it costs between \$25,000 and \$50,000 per ship for a three-day harbor event like Tall Ships Charleston.

Last year's free festival attracted about 22,000 people.

From wire reports



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BUSINESS/WEATHER

Why fear of high inflation is probably overblown

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The past week's stomach-churning stock market losses were ignited by a sudden, contagious fear of surging inflation and higher interest rates. Many investors worried that inflation would send borrowing rates up and sap corporate profits, stock prices and the U.S. economy.

Does that mean higher inflation is on the way? Not necessarily. So far, economists see little evidence that price increases are on the verge of accelerating.

Investors are "getting a few steps ahead of where we actually are," said Michael Arone, chief investment strategist at State Street Global Advisers.

The anxiety that's permeated the financial markets represents a sharp change from just a few months ago, when many investors viewed inflation as abnormally low. In November, for instance, investors expected inflation to average just 1.8 percent over the next 10 years based on inflation-adjusted bond prices. That expectation has since risen to a still-mild 2.1 percent.

For now, inflation remains historically low, as it has been the

past eight years. The Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge shows that prices rose only 1.7 percent in December from a year earlier, below the average 2.2 percent annual increase during the past 30 years. That's also below even the Federal Reserve's 2 percent target rate.

So why did the markets suddenly panic?

The most obvious trigger was the government's monthly jobs report Friday, which showed that average hourly pay in January jumped 2.9 percent from a year earlier, the sharpest annual increase in eight years.

Increased pay levels can accelerate inflation if employers then must raise prices to cover the extra costs. Higher wages are great for employees, but they can crimp corporate profits, which can lead investors to dump shares.

Higher-than-expected inflation also likely would prompt the Fed to raise short-term interest rates more quickly. Those rate increases, in turn, would swell borrowing costs for businesses and consumers and potentially would slow the economy.

Other factors, too, have intensified inflation worries.

The U.S. dollar has fallen in value compared with overseas

currencies. A cheaper dollar makes the imported goods that Americans buy more expensive.

Prices for such commodities as oil and aluminum also have increased in recent months, raising costs for gas, jet fuel and cars. Oil prices have increased from about \$46 per barrel in June to \$65 on Wednesday. More expensive fuel can raise prices for airline tickets.

Megan Greene, chief economist at Manulife Asset Management, said it isn't surprising that investors have suddenly grown nervous. Higher pay and inflation typically do kick in after years of steady economic growth. The unemployment rate is just 4.1 percent, a 17-year-low. A mild rise in inflation is not only expected but healthy.

But she, like most economists, thinks the markets have overreacted.

To begin with, the annual hourly wage gain that triggered Friday's market plunge might have been a temporary blip. Some economists note that it was likely inflated by cold weather. Construction workers and other hourly employees likely stayed home during January's icy spells and lost pay.

A separate government measure of hourly wages, which excludes managers and supervisors, rose just 2.4 percent in the

past year, about the same sluggish pace as before. That suggests that much of the increase in the past year went mostly to managers.

Many economists also note that there is a limit to how far wages can rise. U.S. companies still can move work overseas to find cheaper workers. There are still hundreds of millions of people in China and India who soon could move to cities to work for lower wages.

There is also the "Amazon effect," a phrase that underscores the difficulty many retailers have in raising prices. If they do, it is now much easier for shoppers to simply find better prices online. And with many imports coming from developing countries where workers are cheap, finding those lower-priced alternatives isn't hard.

Even if inflation seems unlikely to surge significantly higher anytime soon, economists cite another potential cause for alarm: There is more uncertainty about how the Fed might react to faster price gains. This week, Jerome Powell succeeded Janet Yellen as the leader of the Fed. On Feb. 2, Yellen's final day, and Monday, Powell's first day, the Dow Jones industrial average plunged a combined 1,800 points.

Other factors could raise inter-

est rates even if inflation remains in check. The new tax overhaul could spur more consumer spending and is projected to add \$1.5 trillion in federal debt. Congress also is considering a big increase in spending as part of a budget deal being negotiated.

All of that requires the Treasury to borrow more by issuing more Treasury bills and notes. The increased federal borrowing could force up the yield on the 10-year Treasury note, which would increase borrowing costs for mortgages, cars and other items.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Feb. 9)	\$1.2599
Dollar buys (Feb. 9)	€0.7937
British pound (Feb. 9)	\$1.43
Japanese yen (Feb. 9)	106
South Korean won (Feb. 9)	1,060.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769
Canada (Dollar)	\$1.4040/0.7122
China (Yuan)	6.2381
Denmark (Krone)	6.9615
Egypt (Pound)	17.6944
Euro	\$1.2278/0.8144
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8105
Hungary (Forint)	253.49
Israel (Sheqel)	3.4657
Japan (Yen)	109.43
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3001
Malaysia (Ringgit)	2.8883
Philippines (Peso)	51.68
Poland (Zloty)	3.40
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7504
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3291
South Korea (Won)	1,090.04
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9401
Thailand (Baht)	31.82
Turkey (Lira)	3.8156

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	4.50
Discount rate	2.00
Federal funds market rate	1.42
3-month bill	1.50
30-year bond	3.11

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Germany	\$2.926	\$3.203	\$3.438	\$3.375
Change in price	+0.2 cents	+0.2 cents	+2.7 cents	+1.6 cents
Netherlands	--	\$3.709	\$3.857	\$3.759
Change in price	--	+3.5 cents	+4.2 cents	-2.5 cents
U.K.	--	\$3.148	\$3.383	\$3.320
Change in price	--	+3.2 cents	+2.7 cents	+1.6 cents
Azores	--	--	\$3.381	--
Change in price	--	--	+2.7 cents	--
Belgium	--	\$2.784	\$3.028	\$2.984
Change in price	--	no change	no change	no change
Turkey	--	--	\$3.259	\$3.196*
Change in price	--	--	+2.7 cents	+1.6 cents
Italy	\$3.974	--	--	\$4.012
Change in price	no change	--	--	no change

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	--	\$3.179	--	\$3.319
Change in price	--	+2.6 cents	--	+2.0 cents
Okunawa	\$2.669	--	--	\$3.319
Change in price	+3.0 cents	--	--	+2.0 cents
South Korea	\$2.709	\$2.979	\$3.219	\$3.159
Change in price	+3.0 cents	+3.0 cents	+3.0 cents	+2.0 cents
Guam	\$2.699**	\$2.979	\$3.219	--
Change in price	+3.0 cents	+3.0 cents	+3.0 cents	--

* Diesel EFD ** Midgrade
For the EFD for Feb. 10-16

MARKET WATCH

Feb. 7, 2018

Dow Jones Industrials	-19.42
	24,893.35
Nasdaq composite	-63.90
	7,051.98
Standard & Poor's 500	-13.48
	2,681.66
Russell 2000	0.80
	1,507.97

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

WEEKEND



Timberlake lost
in the 'Woods'
Music, Page 36

THE 15:17 TO PARIS

Life is literally like a movie as American heroes are cast as themselves
in Clint Eastwood's new film about a thwarted terrorist attack

Pages 24-25

WEEKEND: GADGETS & CHARTS

Monopoly edition reflects players' tendency to cheat

BY TRAVIS M. ANDREWS
The Washington Post

In a heated game of Monopoly, there was always a certain gravitas in being the banker, the player who keeps a close eye on the money and ensures everyone plays by the rules. Without the banker, cheating would be almost inevitable.

But what if cheating was the whole point of the game? That's the case in a new edition of Monopoly, which Hasbro will release in the fall, according to Insider.

The cheaters edition follows the rules of classic Monopoly, except this version encourages players to break them. In addition to the community chest and chance cards, this version includes 15 cheat cards. At any point, five of these can be in the middle of the board. They encourage players to cheat in various ways, from collecting rent on another player's property or stealing money from the bank.

That last one shouldn't be too difficult since "for the first time in Monopoly history, there is no designated Banker," Jonathan Berkowitz, senior vice president of Hasbro gaming, told Insider. "Players are in control of the Bank on their turn, and pass it to the next player when their turn is over, making it easier to pull [off] 'cheats.'"

Players who successfully cheat are handsomely rewarded for their deceit,

while those caught red-handed are penalized. One of the more severe penalties is going to jail, a remnant of the original game but with a twist: Attached to this board is a toy handcuff the offending player must wear.

Much like in the original version, a player wins by collecting the most money.

Kirsten (@KirstenAcuna) tweeted "Happy to show off the newest addition to #Monopoly this fall — a version of the game just for cheaters. And it's called the Cheater's Edition." @HasbroNews

There are many versions of Monopoly, most created to attract fans of one thing or another. Those who loved "The Force Awakens" might buy the "Star Wars Edition," for example, while University of Wisconsin Badgers might display a copy of "Wisconsinopoly" atop their basketball. But these versions still expect players to follow the rules, making the cheaters edition one of its more radical spinoffs.

The decision came after a company-sponsored survey found that "nearly half of game players attempt to cheat during Monopoly games," Berkowitz told Insider, adding, "so in 2018, we decided it was time to give fans what they've been craving all along — a Monopoly game that actually encourages cheating."

Ironically, the announcement came about two weeks after Hasbro announced the Monopoly CheatBot, a Facebook chatbot that Monopoly players can use until Feb. 16 to report someone cheating in a game in real time. The bot then does out consequences for the offending player, such as going to jail or paying a \$200 fine. The news release for the CheatBot also cited the survey that found about half of Monopoly players cheat.

JULIA EWAN
Washington Post



ON THE COVER: "The 15:17 to Paris" stars three Americans playing themselves in their real-life tale of thwarting a terrorist attack.

ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN MOORES/Stars and Stripes

GADGET WATCH

Pour wine with cork still intact

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

When you hear about the Coravin wine bottle opener, you might think it's just another gimmicky gadget. I think it's something you must see to believe. A few weeks ago, I saw it, I believed it, and I even had a drink out of it to prove it.

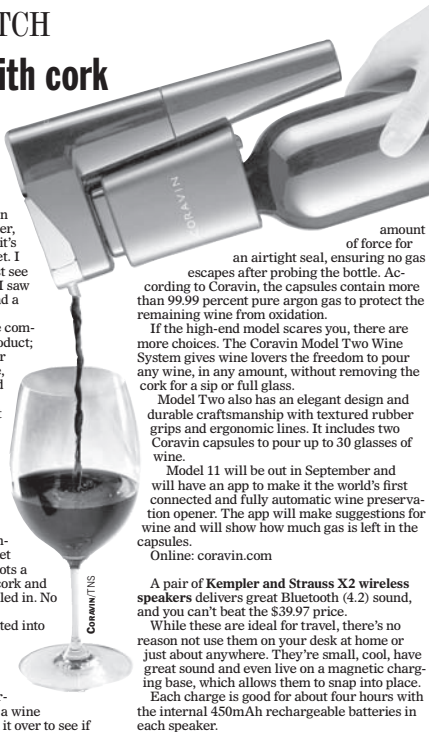
Here are some sayings the company uses to describe the product; "any wine, any amount, save the glass, preserve the bottle, just insert, tip and pour," and my favorite: "The wine you want in the amount you want without ever pulling the cork."

However you describe the action, this innovative device works to perfection. How does it work? At last month's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Coravin displayed the upcoming model 11, which should get you back around \$999. It shoots a thin needle into the bottle's cork and any wrapping the cork is sealed in. No need to remove anything.

After the needle was inserted into the bottle, a company representative poured me a glass of wine. She handed me the bottle to inspect, and it was a real bottle — no hidden curtains, no rabbit in a box, just a wine opener and a bottle. I turned it over to see if anything would spill, and it was dry. Upon close inspection of where the needle entered, you can barely see any evidence.

This system allows your wine to remain fresh since the cork is not removed. My demonstrator explained that after the Coravin is removed, the cork simply fills in the hole.

The Coravin holds your bottle, and with load cell technology, the capsule-loading chamber creates the perfect



a pair of Kempler and Strauss X2 wireless speakers delivers great Bluetooth (4.2) sound, and you can't beat the \$399.97 price.

While these are ideal for travel, there's no reason not to use them on your desk at home or just about anywhere. They're small, cool, have great sound and even live on a magnetic charging base, which allows them to snap into place. Each charge is good for about four hours with the internal 450mAh rechargeable batteries in each speaker.

The speakers come in a pair so they can be separated for a wireless stereo sound. Picture two donut holes that weigh 2.4 ounces and are made with an aluminum body, and you'll come close to the 1.9-by-1.2-inch size of each.

Travel straps to attach to each speaker are included along with a charging cable and a USB AC adapter plug.

Online: kemplerusa.com; \$399.97 in black or silver

Each charge on the donut hole-sized Kempler and Strauss X2 wireless speakers is good for about four hours.

KEMPLERUSA/TNS



ITUNES MUSIC

The top 10 songs on iTunes for the week ending Feb. 1:

1. "Say Something" (feat. Chris Stapleton), Justin Timberlake
2. "You Make It Easy," Jason Aldean
3. "God's Plan," Drake
4. "The Middle," Zedd, Maren Morris & Grey
5. "Perfect," Ed Sheeran
6. "Finesse" (Remix, feat. Cardi B), Bruno Mars
7. "Meant to Be" (feat. Florida Georgia Line), Bebe Rexha
8. "Havana" (feat. Young Thug), Camila Cabello
9. "Praying," Keshi
10. "Despacito" (feat. Justin Bieber), Luis Fonsi & Daddy Yankee

— Compiled by AP

SPOTIFY MUSIC

The top 10 songs on Spotify for the week ending Feb. 6:

1. "God's Plan," Drake
2. "Havana" (feat. Young Thug), Camila Cabello
3. "rockstar" (feat. 21 Savage), Post Malone
4. "IDGAF," Dua Lipa
5. "Finesse" (Remix, feat. Cardi B), Bruno Mars
6. "Pray for Me" (with Kendrick Lamar), The Weeknd
7. "River" (feat. Ed Sheeran), Eminem
8. "Never Be the Same," Camila Cabello
9. "Echame La Culpa," Luis Fonsi
10. "Mine," Bazzi

— Compiled by Stars and Stripes

ITUNES MOVIES

The top 10 movies on iTunes for the week ending Feb. 2:

1. "Wind River"
2. "Wonder"
3. "Blade Runner 2049"
4. "Geostorm"
5. "American Made"
6. "Dunkirk"
7. "Baywatch"
8. "Bravet"
9. "Baby Driver"
10. "Groundhog Day"

— Compiled by AP



BOOKS

The top 10 books on eBook charts for the week ending Feb. 2:

1. "The Wife Between Us," Greer Hendricks & Sarah Pekkanen
2. "The Woman in the Window," A.J. Finn
3. "Dark in Death," J.D. Robb
4. "Year of Yes," Shonda Rhimes
5. "Risky Business," Nora Roberts
6. "Still Me," Jojo Moyes
7. "Little Fires Everywhere," Celeste Ng
8. "Forever My Girl," Heidi McLaughlin
9. "Darker," E L James
10. "Fire and Fury," Michael Wolff

— Compiled by AP

APPS

The top iPhone apps for the week ending Feb. 2:

1. Minecraft
2. Pocket Build
3. Heads Up!
4. Plague Inc.
5. Geometry Dash
6. Bloons TD 5
7. PAKO 2
8. Facetune
9. Schedu
10. NBA 2K18

— Compiled by AP

WEEKEND

CHECK IT OUT

Events, entertainment and other ways to fill your free time



Camila Cabello
LIONEL HAHN,
ABACA PRESS/TNS

Cabello shines with 'Camila'

Camila Cabello made waves about a year ago when she announced she was leaving the female singing group Fifth Harmony. When a singer goes solo, it's not always a success story, but she is delivering the goods on her first album. "Camila" debuted atop the Billboard charts, and early reviews say it's strong from top to bottom.

Though only 20, the Cuban-

American Cabello clearly wants to celebrate and explore her past and her heritage. Her most recent hit, "Havana," is somewhat rowdy, but Cabello goes for a softer, more introspective touch with the rest of the tracks. The charismatic Cabello seems to be forging her own path, and to judge by her first album, it could be one destined for greatness.

• **Review on Page 37.**

2 'Only the Brave' a true, heroic tale

"Only the Brave" tells one of those incredible-but-true stories of real-life heroism in the face of possible death (see also: This week's release "The 15:17 to Paris"). This story about an elite Arizona firefighting team has bravery, determination and sacrifice in spades. The film, now on DVD, shows the bonds forged between the crew and the toll taken on their families. The tale of running into danger, not away from it, should resonate with the military community.

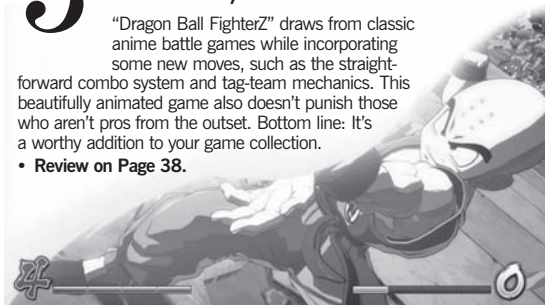
• **More new DVD releases on Page 39.**



3 'Dragon Ball FighterZ': Fresh, fun anime

"Dragon Ball FighterZ" draws from classic anime battle games while incorporating some new moves, such as the straightforward combo system and tag-team mechanics. This beautifully animated game also doesn't punish those who aren't pros from the outset. Bottom line: It's a worthy addition to your game collection.

• **Review on Page 38.**



4

Corden goes a hare too far for 'Peter Rabbit' role

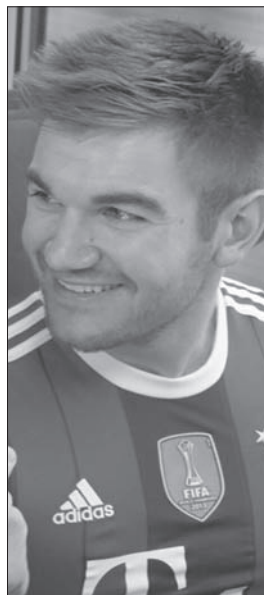
What won't late-night comedian and Grammy host James Corden do for a laugh? If you believe this behind-the-scenes segment from the animated movie "Peter Rabbit," he had extensive surgery and survived for six months on vegetables and tree bark. It isn't true, of course, but it is rather humorous to see Corden make his fellow actors and director crazy by pretending he didn't know his lead character was going to be animated.

• **Watch the video at tinyurl.com/y8kc7vmj.**

• **'Peter Rabbit' movie review on Page 26.**



WEEKEND: MOVIES



TRUE STORY, TRUE HEROES

Eastwood casts friends who thwarted attack in 'The 15:17 to Paris'

By JOSH ROTTENBERG
Los Angeles Times

Grasping for a way to describe the indescribable, stunned survivors of terror attacks have often reached for the imagery of cinema: "It was like a movie." But that phrase has never taken on quite the same meaning as it has for Spencer Stone, Alek Skarlatos and Anthony Sadler.

On Aug. 21, 2015, the three young American friends were on a backpacking trip through Europe when they thwarted a terror attack on a high-speed Thalys train from Amsterdam to Paris, tackling and subduing Moroccan-born Ayoub El-Khazzani, who was armed with an AK-47 assault rifle, a 9mm pistol and other weapons.

Their bravery made headlines around the world and earned France's Legion of Honour, various military awards and a visit to the White House.

Now, in the latest improbable twist, the three are playing themselves in a Clint Eastwood-directed film about the event, "The 15:17 to Paris," opening this weekend.

On a recent afternoon, Stone, Skarlatos and Sadler — who are all 25 — sat in a hotel lobby in Burbank after a taping of "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," trying to wrap their heads around this surreal turn of events. Childhood friends who grew up together in Sacramento, the three

'I'll never forget: One day between takes, Clint Eastwood looks at me and he's like, "Not a bad way to make a living, is it?"'

Anthony Sadler
on his first acting role in "The 15:17 to Paris"

have never been in so much as a school play. Yet here they are starring in a major studio film directed by a genuine Hollywood legend.

"We were raised on Clint Eastwood's movies — I still remember at Spencer's house he had 'Hang 'Em High,' 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly,'" said Skarlatos, who was an Oregon Army National Guard specialist at the time of the attack, on holiday after a stint in Afghanistan. He shook his head. "To get to do all this with guys that you've been friends with for so long — our whole lives have been like a movie. It's ridiculous."

Clint Eastwood casts three young Americans, Anthony Sadler, from left, Spencer Stone and Alex Skarlatos, in "The 15:17 to Paris."
The men subdued a heavily armed terrorist, Ayoub El-Khazzani, on a high-speed train from Amsterdam to Paris in 2015.

WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

much worry and anxiety, they could do it."

Casting people as themselves in movies is not unprecedented, of course. Decorated World War II soldier Audie Murphy played himself in the 1955 film "To Hell and Back." Jackie Robinson and Muhammad Ali starred in their own biopics, as did Howard Stern. Many more real-life figures have popped up in small cameos in film versions of their stories.

Still, when Eastwood first asked Stone, Skarlatos and Sadler if they'd be up for playing themselves, they weren't sure how to respond. Though they had co-authored the 2016 book on which the film was based with Jeffrey E. Stern, the idea of actually appearing in the movie had never occurred to them. The start of production was just three weeks away, and none of them had ever even set foot on a movie set.

They said yes, then almost immediately began to second-guess themselves.

"I really didn't want to ruin the movie," Sadler said. "I'm like, 'Actors can do this and it would probably be more successful.' But Spencer was like, 'Are you really going to look 20 years down the line and say you could have been in a Clint Eastwood movie but you're not? And that convinced me right there. There's no way you could deny that.'"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

WEEKEND: MOVIES

FROM PAGE 24

With what little time they had before shooting, the three wanted to prepare in any way they could. "When the reality set in, we were like, 'We're really thankful for the opportunity, Mr. Eastwood, but we also think we're going to need some acting classes,'" said Stone, who was an Air Force medic at the time of the attack. "And he was like, 'No, you don't want to do that, because then it will make it look like you're acting. I just want you to go out there and be natural and do it how it happened.'"

Eastwood admits that the prospect of casting nonactors didn't thrill the executives at Warner Bros.

"I don't think they were excited at the beginning," he said with a dry laugh.

But in a testament to the tremendous amount of clout Eastwood has at the studio—where his production company is based and where he has directed such films as "Mystic River," "Million Dollar Baby," "American

Sniper" and "Sully"—they agreed to go along with the idea.

There were some bumpy moments at first. In his first big scene, set in a Jamaica Juice, Stone "felt like I was crashing and burning." In another scene, Sadler, unaware of the need for continuity, kept picking up different things with his hands in different takes.

But things soon slipped into gear, and the studio was reassured that the experiment could work.

The attack itself was re-created over five days on a moving train traveling back and forth between Paris and Amsterdam. Along with Stone, Skarlatos and Sadler, a number of other real-life participants were also on hand, including Mark Moogalian, who had sustained a gunshot injury to the neck, and English businessman Chris Norman, who had helped restrain the attacker with a necktie and some cable.

Though the actual attack lasted only about two minutes, Eastwood was intent on re-creating it with exacting, second-by-second fealty, with no extra Hollywood action-movie bells and whistles. "I didn't want to make it look like guys were hanging from the bottom of a train and doing crazy things," Eastwood says.

What transpired in those two minutes was dramatic enough. Moments after the attack had begun, Stone—who had been awakened from a nap by sounds of gunfire and screaming—ran straight at El-Khazzani and took him down. In a stroke of luck, the attacker's AK-47 had jammed and he had accidentally dropped the magazine from his pistol. ("We got the world's worst terrorist," Skarlatos said dryly.)

In the ensuing struggle, Stone sustained gashes to his neck and thumb with a box cutter, putting El-Khazzani in a chokehold as Skarlatos disarmed him and bashed him in the head with the butt of his rifle, knocking him unconscious. Drawing on his medical training, Stone then worked to stop the bleeding in Moogalian's neck.

"That was an intense flashback," said Stone of re-creating that moment onscreen. "We were wearing the same clothes. It's Mark. It's his voice. Everything was exactly the same."

For Eastwood, the film hinges on the question of what motivated the three to move toward danger in that critical moment. "What would most people do—especially when you'd heard the news about Eastwood said, 'What makes a person just jump up and run at some-

Nonactors can act!

Movies with nonactors in crucial roles are often a little arty or obscure, but several have managed to make their way to the Academy Awards. Here are five examples.



"The Best Years of Our Lives" 1946

Harold Russell, a former Army instructor whose hands were blown off in an exercise, stars as a war veteran struggling with his prosthetic hands. Russell won two Oscars for his performance.



"Bicycle Thieves" 1948

This Italian film follows a poor father and his young son as they scour Rome for the stolen bicycle. Factory worker Lamberto Maggiorani and an 8-year-old flower-seller, Enzo Staiola, won the film's leads.



"The Killing Fields" 1984

Former code Haing S. Ngor played Dith Pran, a Cambodian journalist who survived torture and starvation under the Khmer Rouge regime. Ngor won an Oscar for best supporting actor in this role.



"Beasts of the Southern Wild" 2012

Bakery owner Dwight Henry and 5-year-old Quvenzhane Wallis, from New Orleans, star as father and daughter living in a poor neighborhood.



"The Florida Project" 2017

For his film about poor families living in Central Florida, filmmaker Sean Baker found Bri Varrille, who plays a young mother, on Instagram; he found 6-year-old Valeria Cotto at a local Target store.

SOURCE: Newsday

body who has a very reliable weapon pointed at them?"

Though Eastwood insists that the film has no political bent, its story of everyday Americans faking a terror attack seems likely to strike a similar chord with some audiences as 2014's "American Sniper." That film grossed \$547 million worldwide, easily the biggest hit of Eastwood's career.

But as for what it will mean to moviegoers to watch the actual participants rather than actors re-creating that story, Eastwood isn't certain.

"I don't know," he said. "It's certainly a curiosity about it, at least from my experience, people on the street. They seem to think it's an interesting idea. But we'll see."

For their part, Stone, Skarlatos and Sadler still speak of their time with Eastwood with a sense of awe. "We worked out with Clint Eastwood in Venice, and this dude did 10 'body weight dips,'" marveled Skarlatos. "87 years old! He was the coolest thing I've ever seen."

Having gotten a taste of Hollywood, the three all now aim to pursue acting professionally. Stone has already moved to Los Angeles, and Sadler is soon to follow. Acting classes have been taken. Directors and publicists have been retained.

"I'll never forget: One day between takes Clint Eastwood looks at me and he's like, 'Not a bribe to meet me, a living, is it?'" Sadler said. "I was like, 'No, you're right. It's not a bad way to make a living.' We'd all like to pursue it for sure."

That said, he added, "If it ends now, it would be enough. And even if all of the world hated the movie, how could we hate it? This is what happened."



WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

Alex Skarlatos, from left, Anthony Sadler and Spencer Stone star in "The 15:17 to Paris," directed by Clint Eastwood.

Out of gear

Well-intentioned terrorism thriller '15:17' falls flat

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

In the summer of 2015, three young American men from Sacramento, Calif., boarded a train in Amsterdam, en route to Paris, while enjoying a time-honored rite of passage: a European backpacking trip. In Brussels, another young man boarded the train, with a backpack full of guns and 300 rounds of ammunition. After tussling with American teacher Mark Moogalian and shooting him in the neck, he found himself in a car with a trio of young Americans filled up with youthful bravado, military training and a desire to not die lying down. What other heady combination could inspire a person to tackle a shirtless man cocking an AK-47 in a confined space?

When these events happen, especially when the heroes are as appealingly young and attractive as these are, there is the typical fanfare—the awards and decorations, the ticker tape parades, the talk show appearances and even "Dancing With The Stars," for Alek Skarlatos (he came in third). Perhaps a book, and maybe even a movie made about you, such as "The 15:17 to Paris," directed by Clint Eastwood, adapted for the screen by Dorothy Blyskal.

Eastwood decided to take a leap and go further in his biographical depiction, casting the major players as themselves in this blend of documentary and narrative filmmaking. It's a risk that doesn't quite pay off. While the three friends do have their charms on "Ellen" or a late night talk show, their performances in the feature film are essentially an argument for hiring professional actors.

However, the amateur performances aren't the biggest problem with "The 15:17 to Paris." After a while, the awkward line readings fade away, and their natural charisma shines. But for an incident that took

about a minute or two, expanding the story to feature length is a stretch, and Blyskal's script doesn't know where to focus, and features eye-roll inducing, plainly on-the-scene dialogue.

The film jumps between short moments before the attack and the boys' upbringing as mischievous kids, obsessed with guns and war and bonding as outsiders at their Christian school. Years later, Spencer joins the Air Force, Alek the Oregon National Guard, and Anthony enters college. There are a few carefully placed scenes illustrating Spencer's desire to save lives, to be a hero, whether training as a medic or thinking quickly during an active shooter alert. He feels as though life is catapulting him toward a place he needs to be.

The story could have dived into that hunger for action and purpose, or even what drives someone to take a huge risk such as he did, tackling attacker Ayoub El-Khazzani, narrowly escaping death when El-Khazzani's guns jammed. Rather than shattering for inner depth or meaning, it's written off as fate and the grace of God, while much of the film is spent on shallow and essentially meaningless scenes of the guys sightseeing around Europe—selfies, gelato, beer in Germany, clubbing in Amsterdam. They may be playing themselves, but there's no real cinematic character development, for the benefit of the audience.

The action sequence on the train is truly remarkable, and Eastwood shoots with a documentary-style immediacy, but the surrounding film—especially the script and performances—doesn't serve this thrilling true-life story, or the audience. The casting is an interesting experiment, but "The 15:17 to Paris" fails to ever leave the station.

"The 15:17 to Paris" is rated PG-13 for bloody images, violence, some suggestive material, drug references and language. Running time: 94 minutes.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

‘Peter Rabbit’

A stunning, chaotic take on the classic tale

BY KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

Hollywood studios have recently been pillaging the literary canon of beloved children's literature, digging up fodder for animated feature films. The best of these, like the Paddington movies, successfully meld nostalgia with modern and exciting filmmaking, while the more questionable ones, like the recent ‘Ferdinand’ adaptation, manage to muddle the source material with too many pop songs and dirty jokes. The new ‘Peter Rabbit’ adaptation manages to land right in the middle — the animation technology is top-notch, but the gentle spirit of Beatrix Potter's books is subsumed into a chaotic, violent mayhem, manically soundtracked to the day's hits.

Will Gluck directs and co-wrote with Rob Lieber this adaptation of ‘The Tale of Peter Rabbit,’ the story of naughty rabbit Beat (James Corden), who can't help but snack from Mr. McGregor's garden.

This version ups the ante significantly in the Garden Wars, especially when Mr. McGregor (Sam Neill) dies, and his fastidious nephew Thomas (Domhnall Gleeson) comes to Windermere. Thomas, hoping to sell off his uncle's property to fund his own toy shop, finds that the ‘vermin’ have moved in. And in fact, the anthropomorphized, clothes-wearing wildlife of this country village have hosted quite the produce-fueled rager in the McGregor home.

The photorealistic animation by Animal Logic is truly breathtaking, especially in the first few moments of the film. The rabbits are extraordinarily lifelike, with their individual strands of soft fur and shiny eyes. When Peter hops into the arms of



James Corden lends his voice to Beatrix Potter's notable hare in the 3-D live-action/CGI animated adventure comedy film ‘Peter Rabbit.’ With Rose Byrne and Domhnall Gleeson.
Sony Pictures

neighbor Bea (Rose Byrne) for a cuddle, it's as if she's holding the actual animal. Gluck showcases the animated creatures with action-packed filmmaking featuring sophisticated camera movements.

But those whiz-bang tracking shots are all put in service of a shockingly savage and brutal war between Peter and his crew (Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-Tail, Benjamin Bunny) and the fussy Thomas. At first, Peter just wants to get at those sweet, sweet fruits and veggies. Then it's simply a matter of proving he can, and ultimately, of displaced jealousy over Thomas' budding relationship with Bea, whom Peter sees as a mother (she's a version of a modernized Potter, talking to and painting

her furry friends).

The impish Peter takes the feud entirely too far, and ‘Peter Rabbit’ descends into a truly sadistic display of violence, as poor Gleeson is pounded, pummeled, battered, bruised, electrocuted and exploded at the paws of the brutal bunnies.

There's a clever little meta streak that runs through ‘Peter Rabbit,’ especially among the wildlife, who snark and joke and talk about their ‘character flaws,’ make war movie references, and ‘pour one out’ for their fallen homie Mr. McGregor, all while popping along to endless pop and hip-hop tunes. There's a whole essay to be written about the cultural appropriation of gangster rap symbols into

this oh-so-twee British property, but this is neither the time nor place.

Ultimately, after the dust has settled, the lesson at hand is one of peaceful coexistence with the environment. The more you try to shut something out, with gates and fences and dynamite, the more it will try to fight back. There's also a message about owning your actions and taking responsibility, even if you are a tiny talking bunny wearing a blue jacket. But when a bunny misbehaves like Peter does, apologies are necessary all around. Perhaps even to the audience of the film.

‘Peter Rabbit’ is rated PG for some rude humor and action. Running time: 93 minutes.

‘Fifty Shades Freed’ a dull end to E.L. James’ erotic trilogy

BY JORDAN MINTZER
The Hollywood Reporter

Losing the book on what's arguably one of the worst film franchises in recent memory, ‘Fifty Shades Freed’ doesn't quite end with the bang one would hope for. Although, if by ‘bang’ you're thinking what everyone else is thinking, then there are definitely a few of those in this third and final adaptation of the best-selling E.L. James trilogy. And there's even the bang of a gun going off at some point in the third act.

But in terms of drama, or melodrama, or just bad drama, ‘Freed’ rarely delivers the goods while trying hard to give fans what they came for: more visits to the ‘playroom’ for some lightweight sadomasochism, more eye-rolling plot machinations involving Christian Grey's troubled past, more reactionary views on love and marriage, more money shots of sports cars, private jets and vacation homes that only the 1 percent can afford, and more attempts to turn what may be one of the duller couples to ever grace the screen into two captivating characters.

When we last left gazillionaire Grey (Jamie Dornan) and his paramour Anastasia Steele (Dakota Johnson), they were on the verge of getting married. ‘Freed,’ with its script written by ‘Fifty Shades Darker’ scribe Niall Leonard, begins with the couple's glorious wedding, followed by a honeymoon that includes stops in Paris and the Cote d'Azur.

Back in Seattle, the two settle into their new roles of husband and wife, although Ana wants to keep her job in book publishing and refuses to be constrained the way Christian would like. As in the other movies, it becomes a question of how much she will let herself be dominated — ‘You can't keep me in a cage,’ she tells him early on — in a relationship that, despite all the bells, whistles and bondage straps, is actually as traditional as they get. It turns out the big issue is that Ana may want to have a baby and Christian isn't quite ready for it yet. Wait, who's supposed to be ‘freed’ here?

The rest of the plot is driven by Jack Hyde (Eric Johnson), Ana's former boss who is now seeking revenge on the Grey couple. Why he does so is revealed



Universal Pictures

Dakota Johnson and Jamie Dornan return in ‘Fifty Shades Freed,’ the climactic chapter of the erotic drama.

extremely late in the movie when some documents are pulled out of a manila folder. Before that happens, we have to believe that Hyde, a man who used to be a fiction book editor, has now become an expert in corporate sabotage, burglary, blackmail and kidnapping. It's so poorly handled that it's laughable, although the big problem with the Fifty Shades movies is that, except for maybe one joke here, they don't know how to laugh at themselves.

What this all adds up to isn't much, and the film's race-

against-the-clock finale has the creative suspense of a ‘T.J. Hooker’ episode. Director James Foley, returning after taking over the franchise from Sam Taylor-Johnson, made some decent movies a few decades ago (‘At Close Range,’ ‘Glen Gary Glen Ross,’ the underrated ‘The Corruptor’) and then worked on ‘House of Cards’ for the first three seasons. But he seems to take little interest in this material beyond applying an extra level of gloss to each shot, with the production team going overboard

on the BDSM and bling.

Johnson and Dornan do their best with the material as well, and at least for the former's sake, Ana has a minimal sense of humor and a bit of life to her. Christian, on the other hand, is such a bore that Dornan seems to be doubling down on the stiffness and gives his line readings like he's reciting from a teleprompter. For a man who can buy anything he wants, including the woman of his dreams, Grey should maybe try investing in a personality.

For the many erotic titillations the Fifty Shades films advertise, their approach to sex has always seemed way too asexualized, like we're watching two people make love with rubber gloves and a bottle of hand sanitizer. The kinkiest scene in the whole series is probably one that occurs about halfway through ‘Freed’ where, after a bout of insomnia, Ana and Christian decide to get busy in the kitchen with a tub of vanilla ice cream. They actually look like they're having fun for once, which is not such a bad thing in what's meant to be a love story. But in terms of, er, last ticks, it comes as too little, too late.

‘Fifty Shades Freed’ is rated R for strong sexual content, nudity and language. Running time: 105 minutes.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe



PHOTOS BY WILLIAM HOWARD/Stars and Stripes

Colchester Castle in Colchester, England, is the largest Norman keep ever built in Britain and the largest surviving example in Europe.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Address: Castle Park, Colchester
CO1 1TJ, England

The castle is about an hour's drive from RAF Mildenhall via the A14 motorway. Parking is available in the nearby Priory Street and Britannia car parks, a few minutes from the castle.

TIMES

11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sundays, and
10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays to
Saturdays

COSTS

Admission is 7.75 pounds (\$11) for
adults, 4.80 pounds for children

FOOD

Vending machines on site offer
snacks and beverages.

INFORMATION

Phone: (+44)(0) 1206-282939;
email: museums@colchester.gov.
uk; website: tinyurl.com/ydenoael

— William Howard

JOIN THE HORDES

Colchester Castle's historical significance, ghost tours draw crowds



The Colchester Sphinx inside the museum at Colchester Castle is from an elaborate Roman tomb estimated to be from A.D. 43-75.



The Colchester Vase was found in a grave dated between A.D. 175 and 200.

BY WILLIAM HOWARD
Stars and Stripes

A visit to Colchester Castle is the perfect way to experience a bit of history during a day of shopping in the center of the English town of Colchester.

The row of stores on High Street leads downhill to an open park, where the massive castle dominates the skyline view.

Colchester Castle is the largest Norman keep ever built in England. William the Conqueror ordered its construction in 1069, and it was completed in 1076, when Colchester was the first Roman capital of Britain. It was built over the ruined foundations of the Temple of Claudius, itself erected between A.D. 54 and 60.

The museum inside the castle includes important holdings, such as Neolithic pottery; the Coin of Cunobelin, which dates from A.D. 10 to 40; and other artifacts recovered from the graves of Roman warriors buried in the first century.

Interactive displays let you don Roman armor, lead a chariot race and witness the forced confession from a witch in an interrogation in a prison cell.

Plan your visit carefully, because between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., young children on school field trips take over the museum, running through-out the displays and screaming.

If you're brave and don't mind staying out late, ghost tours are available at the castle, which has seen much bloodshed over the centuries. It was, for example, the target of a Celtic uprising against Roman rule in A.D. 60-61, and self-styled witch finder Gen. Matthew Hopkins interrogated and imprisoned suspected witches here in 1645.

The ghost tours are the only way to see the prison vaults beneath the castle, where prisoners were kept in the most barbaric of conditions and often left to rot to death.

Colchester Castle Ghost Hunt is a special event held a couple of times each year. It costs 59 pounds (\$83.70) per person. The event is 9 p.m. to 2 a.m., with ghost hunting vigils utilizing specialized equipment. For more: tinyurl.com/ychn9z97.

I'd like to take the ghost tour on my next visit. It would be a great way to avoid the horror of the horde of children inside the castle museum during the day.

howard.william@stripes.com
Twitter @Howard_stripes



An illustration of Boadicea's uprising at the Colchester Castle. The British folk hero was a queen of the British Celtic Iceni tribe who led a failed uprising against the occupying forces of the Roman Empire in A.D. 60.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Sale some port in Portugal's Porto

I'm really into "second cities" these days. Over several generations, Industrial Age powerhouses in Europe turned into what we would call the "rust belt," while their elegant "first city" counterparts enjoyed the luster of the Information Age. But over the past decade or so, the rust has become a trendy accessory and industrial ruins have turned bohemian chic.

A prime example is Porto, the hub of Portugal's north. Just three hours from Lisbon by train, it's fiercely proud of what distinguishes it from the national capital as it ages happily along the Douro River, along with most of the world's port wine.

Porto seems entirely made of granite — and even its Romanesque cathedral is stout and stony. But the city's inviting shopping streets are ornamented with playful architectural touches and lovely blue-tiled facades. Spared by the 1755 earthquake that toppled Lisbon, Porto is charmingly well preserved, and the city has kept its Old World atmosphere.

The city comes with the steady sea breeze, seagull soundtrack and ever-changing weather that you'd expect from an oceanic city. You're likely to get sun and rain in the same day — causing the locals to exclaim, "A widow's going to remarry."

The two biggest draws here are the photogenic riverfront Ribeira quarter and the tourable port-wine lodges just across the river in Vila Nova de Gaia. But the city also comes with a thriving food scene — including a few food festivals, markets, halls anywhere, bustling shopping streets, architecturally lavish churches, narrow cobbled lanes and a handful of museums worth a look.

The Ribeira (literally "riverbank") district is the city's most colorful and touristy

quarter. Strolling the embankment while popping in and out of shops that line the way is Porto's best lazy-afternoon activity. Be sure to duck into the back streets where time-worn faces and once-dazzling facades seem to ferment into an intoxicating slip of port-for-the-eyes.

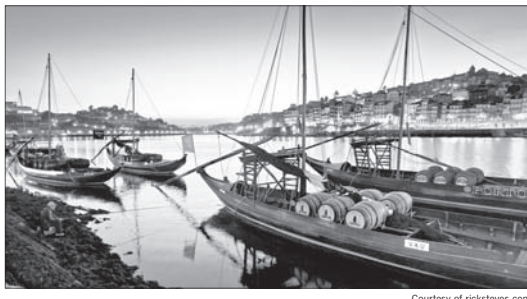


Rick Steves

the Ribeira riverfront. These relaxing one-hour excursions float along the Douro River, offering a fine orientation and glimpses of all of Porto's bridges — most notably the majestic steel Ponte Dona Maria Pia, artfully designed by Gustav Eiffel, architect of Paris' landmark.

For wine connoisseurs, touring a port-wine "lodge," where wine ages for years, and sampling the product is a must. Port is a medium-sweet wine, usually taken as a digestif after dinner. For some, port is an acquired taste — but it's one worth cultivating.

In the district of Vila Nova de Gaia you can choose between 18 lodges that are open for touring and tasting. At any lodge, the procedure is about the same: travelers can simply show up and ask for a tour. Sandeman, the most high-profile company, is sort of the Budweiser of port — a good first stop for novices. If you don't have much time, consider visiting one of the more conveniently located tasting



Courtesy of ricksteves.com

Traditional "rabelo" boats were once used to deliver port wine from Portugal's Douro Valley. Now they enhance a picturesque riverfront scene in the nearby city of Porto.

spots in downtown Porto (though these lack the atmospheric wine-cellar experience).

In addition to tasting wine, Porto offers many food tours. Like similar food tours that are trendy throughout Europe, they're timed for an early lunch or dinner, last around three hours, come with more than a mile of walking and include four to eight stops. The tours are pricey, but if you think of them as a meal as well as a tour, they make the splurge easier to justify.

Porto natives are known as "tripeiros" (tripe, or cow stomach lining, eaters) — much as Lisbonans are often called "cabbage-eaters" — and you might indeed encounter tripe stew on your food tour. Along with this local specialty, you'll see plenty of seafood and meat on

Porto menus. A favorite sandwich is the francesinha, which is like a Portuguese French dip with a tomato-based sauce. Picnic sandwiches and scenic perches — for people-watching, views or both — are easy to come by in lively Porto. The town's two most famous foods — tripe stew and a quadruple-decker sandwich drenched in sauce — say it all: This place is unpretentious. Locals claim they're working too hard to worry about being pretty. As an oft-repeated saying about Portuguese cities goes, "Coimbra studies, Braga prays, Lisbon parties ... and Porto works."

Rick Steves (ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Carnival in Germany

When a majorette in face paint, blood-spattered nurse and grown woman in a chicken suit pass you by at 8 a.m. in the city square, it's a good bet that the crazy, mixed-up time of year known as Karneval, Fasching or Fastnacht or other terms is once again upon us.

Wherever you are in Germany, you're not too far from a parade or other rites marking "the fifth season." While the country's biggest bashes take place in Cologne, Düsseldorf and Mainz, there's no shortage of buzz on the streets elsewhere. The biggest festivities play out on Rose Monday, Feb. 12, but many parades take place on Sunday as well. Children in your midst will enjoy reprising their Halloween costumes and scooping up all the loot tossed into the crowds from the floats. Here's a brief sampling of what's on when and where:

Aachen: A children's costume parade takes place from 11:11 a.m. on Feb. 11; the big Rose Monday procession of more than one hundred floats and marching groups starts at 11:11 a.m. Feb. 12. Online: tinyurl.com/ybsy5y3.

Cologne: Carnival celebrations culminate with the famous Rose Monday parade from 10:30 a.m.



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler

on Feb. 12. The 4-mile-long parade would take more than three hours to watch in full. Stray far from the cathedral, where crowds are at their thickest. Online: tinyurl.com/zckcy5b.

Duesseldorf: A family-friendly children's procession starts at 2 p.m. on Feb. 10; an informal street carnival along the Koenigsallee featuring homemade floats gets underway on the morning of Feb. 11; and the huge Rose Monday Parade with its world-famous, politically themed floats starts at noon on Feb. 12. Online: tinyurl.com/y7g2gnup.

Frankfurt: The carnival parade begins at 12:11 p.m. on Feb. 11. A 2-mile-long procession with more than 70 floats and close to 3,000 marchers starts

from Untermainkai and weaves through the city center, winding up along the Roemerberg and the Main River. Online: grosser-rat.de/fastnachtszug.

Koblenz: More than 40 carnival clubs and thousands of their members march through the city where the Mosel meets the Rhine. The parade starts at 12:11 p.m. on Feb. 12. Online: tinyurl.com/y7gcxctb.

Ludwigshafen: Mannheim and Ludwigshafen jointly organize a parade and take turns hosting it; in even-numbered years, it's Ludwigshafen's turn. The parade takes place from 1:11 p.m. on Feb. 11. Online: tinyurl.com/ybmzldd1.

Mainz: This massive parade gets underway from 11:11 a.m. on Rose Monday, Feb. 12. Half a million costumed spectators typically take in the 4-mile-long spectacle made up of more than 150 floats and 10,000 marchers. Families with work and school on the Monday can enjoy an alternative event on Feb. 10, when a parade of masked kindergartners, schoolkids and youth club members marches through the city from 2:11 p.m. Online: tinyurl.com/y84wz5qg.

Munich: A carnival highlight comes on Shrove Tuesday, Feb. 13, when the dance of the market women takes place at the Viktualienmarkt. Around a dozen



MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

It is not unusual for dancers to be lifted, or even tossed high in the air, during carnival parades, such as this Cologne Rose Monday parade in 2014. Cologne's parade is more than four miles long.

elaborately costumed women, real workers at the market, show their steps at 11 a.m. On Ash Wednesday, the city's restaurants serve fish specialties and locals head to the Fish Fountain to wash out their wallets, a ritual meant to ensure they stay full through the coming year. Online: tinyurl.com/y79y659z.

Nuremberg: Around 50 groups take part in a parade attracting around 100,000 viewers annually. Documents date it back to 1397, making it Germany's oldest known carnival parade. This year's edition, the 620th, takes place at 1 p.m. on Feb. 11. The route starts in the Stadtpark,

runs through the center and ends at the White Tower. Online: tinyurl.com/yav8872l.

Wiesbaden: a parade with more than 200 groups sets off from Elsaesser Platz at 1:11 p.m. on Feb. 11. Expect marching bands, strident music, themed carriages and merriment in the streets. Online: tinyurl.com/y9595yrv.

Wuerzburg: with more than 150 groups and many decorated floats, this parade is billed as Bavaria's biggest. It gets going from Semmelstrasse at 1:55 a.m. on Feb. 11 and ends at Sanderring. Online: faschingszug-wuerzburg.de.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe

With its high-arching stone ceiling, the downstairs area in the Schlemmerscheune in Weilerbach, Germany, looks as though it was once an old wine cellar, an atmosphere that lends some charm to the traditional German restaurant.

Jennifer H. Swan
Stars and Stripes



Go nuts with customizable, tasty granola

By ELIZABETH KARMEL
Associated Press

I have been a fan of homemade granola for as long as I can remember. I literally grew up with it as my mother made it way before it was a trend to do so.

As I began cooking for myself, I adapted my mother's recipe with my favorite fruit and nuts. That's the great thing about granola. It is totally customizable. You can add or subtract anything you don't like as long as you have an oat base.

ELIZABETH'S DRIED FRUIT AND NUT GRANOLA

Servings: Makes 40 servings
(Each is ½ cup)

Start to finish: 50 minutes

Ingredients:
8 cups toasted rolled oats (18-ounce container)

2 cups shelled pistachios (8-ounce bag)

1-2 cups pecans, roughly chopped or other favorite nut

2 cups raw pumpkin seeds (8 ounces)

1 cup packed sweetened dried coconut

3 tablespoons granulated sugar

1 tablespoon cinnamon

½ teaspoon fine-grain sea salt

⅓ cup maple syrup

½ cup light brown sugar or maple sugar

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1½ teaspoons vanilla extract

2 cups dried cherries (8-ounce bag)

2 cups dried cranberries or white raisins

2 cups candied ginger, cut into slivers

2 cups dried apricots cut into slivers, or other dried fruit as desired

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 300 F.

In a very large bowl, combine the oats, nuts, coconut, granulated sugar, cinnamon and salt.

Stir well to blend.

In a small saucepan, warm the maple syrup, brown sugar and olive oil over low heat, stirring gently, until the sugar is melted.

Stir to combine the sugar and oil.

Pour over the dry ingredients.

Stir repeatedly to coat all the ingredients equally. Spread the mixture evenly on a piece of parchment paper set into a rimmed baking sheet. Bake for about 40 minutes, or until golden.

Stir about every 15 minutes so that all of the ingredients are toasted and brown.

When it's ready, remove the pan from the oven, stir well

— this will keep it from cooling into a hard, solid sheet — and cool completely.

When cool to touch, transfer the granola back to the very large bowl.

Add the dried fruit and stir (or shake, if using a jar or bag) to mix. Store in an airtight container — storage jar, or re-closable plastic bag.

Serve with yogurt, milk, honey and fruit, or eat straight up!

After Hours: Germany

By JENNIFER H. SWAN
Stars and Stripes

The Schlemmerscheune restaurant in Weilerbach, a village near Ramstein Air Base, is aptly named.

In English, it means "gourmet barn."

The building that houses the restaurant, which is connected to Hotel Degen, looks like a former barn inside. The downstairs, with high-arching stone ceilings — and the most charming place to sit — appears to be an old wine cellar.

That's the barn part. The food, meanwhile, certainly meets my definition of gourmet. In this case, that includes eating a sugar doughnut with a fork.

On a recent weekday in early February, perhaps because it was also Fasching season, dessert for the lunch specials was a doughnut. On a plate. With a fork.

It was delicious, soft enough to slice with the side of a fork.

But plated doughnuts aren't the only fancy food at Schlemmerscheune. Other offerings from the regular menu, and solidly in the gourmet category, include lamb tenderloin seasoned with garlic and thyme and served with a side of green beans and bacon; prawns and Atlantic sole with a prosciutto foam sauce; and my favorite of all, chicken breast fillet with mango sauce and a side of buttery tagliatelle.

I tried the chicken breast fillet during a previous visit to Schlemmerscheune and it was divine, the rare kind of dish that was so good I would have licked the plate if no one was looking.

That mango sauce was on my mind when I went there for lunch recently. But I thought it best to order something different, to see if it was equally as good. I ordered the Maispoularde — corn-fed chicken — with a side of vegetable rice in curry sauce.

The curry sauce didn't knock my socks off, but the chicken was tender enough to eat without sauce. Whether that was due to cooking methods or the type of chicken, I would sure like to know. Chicken baked at my house tends to be tough as shoe leather.

Despite all the words in this review devoted to chicken, much of Schlemmerscheune's menu is traditional German fare — rump steaks, schnitzels, etc. Though I tend to steer away from that, Schlemmerscheune is the one place I would go for traditional



PHOTOS BY JENNIFER H. SWAN/Stars and Stripes

Above: Soup and salad were included with a weekly lunch special in early February at the Schlemmerscheune restaurant in Weilerbach, Germany. The tables had a fancy touch, with a lighted-candle and flower arrangement.

Upper right: This corn-fed chicken with rice in a curry sauce was a recent lunch special.

Lower right: A soft, sugary doughnut made for a surprising but delightful dessert.



SCHLEMMERSCHEUNE

Location: Mackenbacher Strasse 2, 67685 Weilerbach, Germany

Hours: Open for lunch 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and for dinner 5:30-9:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Fridays. Open for dinner only on Saturday, 5:30-9:30 p.m. Closed Mondays and Sundays.

Prices: Dinner entrees with meat start at 12.50 euros (about \$15) and go up from there; vegetarian entrees start at 9.50 euros; most lunch specials are less than

10 euros and include a starter and dessert.

English menu: The regular menu is in German and English; lunch specials are in German only; but staff can help translate.

Dress: Casual

Information: Phone: (+49)(0)6374-91280, email: info@hotel-degen.de, website: hotel-degen.de

— Jennifer H. Swan

German, just because I'm betting it's really, really good.

Most reviews on the travel website TripAdvisor attest to this. Out of 32 traveler ratings, 22 rated the restaurant "excellent," nine gave it a "very good;" one outlier checked off "terrible." That might have been the person who complained, "The waitress loudly insisted several times that they had no turkey on the menu."

Who needs turkey when the chicken is top-notch, I say.

One caveat: The prices are a little on the high side, but they're well worth it, in my opinion. If you're pinching pennies, the best value is the lunch menu. The day I was there, most specials were 8.90 euros — or about \$11. That included an appetizer — on this day it was soup — and a dessert.

swan.jennifer@stripes.com

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

A tale from the crypt

Seeking a family connection at the Strasbourg Cathedral

By WILL HAWKES

Special to The Washington Post

The crypt at Strasbourg Cathedral isn't how I'd imagined it. I'd expected something richly atmospheric, sepulchral, a space stuffed with the accumulated religious ephemera of more than eight centuries.

It's actually quite tidy; almost cozy, in fact. There are simple wooden chairs in neat rows, a humble altar with a beautiful, blue-and-green, stained-glass window above it, an elegant wooden statue of the Virgin of Strasbourg (Mary, arms stretched, with Jesus, clutching a fleur-de-lis, on her lap), and a stone memorial etched with the names of the archbishops buried under the cathedral's main altar.

All very charming, but I'm looking for something more personal. I'm hoping to unravel an old family story: my great-great grandfather George Giesner left France to seek work in Manchester, England, in the mid-19th century. Apparently he had a relative — a brother, perhaps? — who was commemorated in the cathedral.

This vague tale was embroidered by an elderly aunt who told my mom at a family funeral in the 1970s that said brother — Henri Giesner — was buried in the crypt. If he ever was, he's not now. Michel Bocci, the chef des sacristains (chief janitor) who opened up the crypt especially for me, can't help with Henri.

Oh well. I wasn't really expecting to find him here and, anyway, it's not my final option; I've arranged a meeting with Sabine Bengel, who works for the Fondation de l'Oeuvre Notre-Dame, the organization that built the cathedral and still looks after its stonework. If anyone will know about an old memorial tucked away, perhaps it will be there.

In the meantime, there's a day and a half to enjoy Strasbourg. The city seems quiet, I tell Bocci as we climb the steps out of the crypt. "This is the best time to visit, before the Christmas market begins [on Nov. 24]," he says. "We have 5 million visitors to the cathedral each year, but not many right now. It's very tranquil."

It's true; there are perhaps a dozen people in the cathedral, and most of them are waiting patiently in front of the astronomical clock to the right of the altar.

This 59-foot-tall clock, built in the 16th century and renovated in the 19th century, is ornate and richly decorated with antique moving parts. At 10 a.m., the crowd is rewarded when — about 32 feet up — a little automated model youth, arrow in hand, shuffles across in front of a bony, barely clad depiction of death.

On the wall opposite, there's Sylvie Lander's modern work "Ex Tempore," but a name amateurishly etched into the stone below catches my eye: "George Koehler Zimmer Dresden 1666." I approach the man running the

nearby souvenir stall. Is it really from 1666? He lowers his glasses to get a good look. "Possibly," he says. "But he wasn't a very good draughtsman!"

No, and he wasn't Henri Giesner, either. He's nowhere to be seen, but there's plenty more to see: stained-glass windows featuring long-dead kings, a plaque commemorating the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1988, a handful of shrines where offerings can be made to saints.

Lunchtime — restaurants are often already full at noon in France — is fast approaching, so I step outside heading along the north side of the red-stone

cathedral. My heart is set on Choucroute garnie, the hearty, afternoon-be-damned Alsatian classic dish; it's on the lunch menu at Le Clou, a wine lounge on the nearby Rue de Chaudron. Pushing open the heavy wooden door, I step through deep-red curtains into a wave of warmth and happy conversation. I'm just in time; there's only one table left.

With its dark wood furniture, floral tablecloths, wine served from gray-blue ceramic jugs and plates also used as decorations, Le Clou is fitted-out in typically rustic Alsatian style. One blue-rimmed plate on the wall shows two men in traditional Alsatian

garb squaring up awkwardly ahead of a wrestle: Une Affaire d'Honneur, or matter of honor, reads the legend.

The food is very good: a mixture of knack sausages (smoked and country-style), thick, smoked bacon and pork neck served on a huge mound of rich, delicately tangy sauerkraut, plus an unnecessary boiled potato (a third of which I leave, not wishing to appear greedy).

The afternoon and evening pass in a gentle blur. I stride around to the east and north of the cathedral, taking in Place Gutenberg — where a pair of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31



WILL HAWKES/special to The Washington Post

Christmas decorations hang in front of Chez Yvonne, one of Strasbourg's famed winstubs (or wine restaurants) as the Spire of Strasbourg Cathedral spire looms above.

KNOW & GO

Where to stay

Hotel Gutenberg

31 Rue des Serruriers; 011-33-3-88-32-1715/ hotel-gutenberg.com/en

Offers modern decor and a hearty Alsatian breakfast. Doubles with breakfast from \$136.

Hotel bis Strasbourg Centre Historique

7 Rue de Moitshien; 011-33-3-30-22-48-70; ibis.com

An excellent budget option. Doubles with breakfast start at about \$74.

Where to eat

Le Clou

3 Rue du Chaudron; 011-33-3-88-32-11-67; le-clou.com

This Michelin Plate-rated Alsatian winstub (wine restaurant) offers an excellent lunch menu, with two courses for about \$17 or three for about \$22. Open 11:45 a.m.-2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.-midnight.

S'Kaechele

8 Rue de l'Argile; 011-33-3-88-22-62-36; skaechele.fr

Excellent Alsatian food at this one-room winstub. Booking ahead is recommended; mains from about \$17.60. Closed Saturday, Sunday and Monday around lunchtime; open other days 11:45 a.m.-1:30 p.m. and 7-9 p.m.

What to do

Strasbourg Cathedral

Place de la Cathédrale; 011-33-3-88-21-43-34; cathedrale-strasbourg.fr

Musée de l'Oeuvre Notre-Dame

3 Place du Château; 011-33-3-68-98-51-60; musees.strasbourg.eu Adults \$7.60; children age 17 and younger free.



WILL HAWKES/special to The Washington Post

A statue of Johannes Gutenberg, the father of printing in Europe, looks over Place Gutenberg.

FROM PAGE 30

handsome old restaurants, boasting neon signage for defunct breweries, overlook Gutenberg's statue and Place Kleber, the city's central square. The next morning, I head back to the cathedral through Petite France, perhaps the most chocolate-box part of this wonderfully preserved city.

I'm going to the Musée de l'Oeuvre-Notre-Dame, in the shadow of the cathedral's 465-feet-high spire, before my meeting. Inside, a boisterous group of small children is squatting in front of a 12th-century lintel decorated with animals, but I have the rest of the museum virtually to myself. There isn't enough time to do it justice. There are too many marvelous stained-glass windows, statues, fragments of stonework, paintings and more besides.

I meet Sabine after ward, at the Fondation's base behind the museum. It is an exciting time for the Fondation, she tells me; it has recently been added to the French national inventory of intangible cultural heritage with a view to applying for UNESCO "intangible heritage" status, perhaps alongside similar organizations in Germany, Austria and Norway. That would really raise awareness of this remarkable cathedral workshop, the only one of its kind in France.

"The first mention of the Fondation is in the 1220s," she says. "Despite the reformation, despite the French Revolution, despite the city's changes in nationality, it has persisted since then."

At the moment, she says, they're restoring the southern facade of the cathedral's transept, where original Romanesque work combines with 12th-century Gothic sculpture. She shows me a diagram detailing which parts are to be repaired. "These are the first Gothic sculptures in Strasbourg and they're very, very good quality," she says.

Fascinating stuff, but I have one more question as we finish up the tour in the top-floor workshop. Has she heard of Henri Giesner? "I don't know about anyone of that name," she says, before thinking, "I have a big book called Biographies Alsaciens; I will have a look for you."

It's a kind offer, but I'm not holding out much hope. Unlike Strasbourg's historic charm, Henri Giesner — if he ever existed — appears to have been lost to the vagaries of time.

RESTAURANT DIRECTORY



GERMANY



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WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Pacific

SNOW BUSINESS

Naeba hotel a great base for skiing — even if you don't spend the night



Left: Visitors to the Naeba Prince Hotel in Niigata Prefecture, Japan, try out virtual-reality skiing.

Below: The Naeba Prince hotel is a huge facility filled with shops, restaurants, heated baths and amusements next to one of the largest ski areas in Japan.

PHOTOS BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes



BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

At Naeba Prince Hotel — nestled in Japan's third-largest ski area about two and a half hours northwest of Tokyo — it's easy to imagine you're inside a massive cruise liner that's run aground at the foot of a dormant volcano.

This 1,299-room hotel seems about as long and wide as a pleasure ship when you're wandering its halls, which seem to go on forever.

In fact, the Naeba Prince Hotel comprises a half-dozen buildings, including a glittering glass tower that looks a little out of place amid Niigata's stunning mountain scenery.

Inside, there are 20 restaurants serving everything from sushi to pizza. There are also bars and convenience stores, two onsens and numerous ski-rental shops where you can check out gear to use on the lifts outside.

The place has fantastic views of 7,037-foot Mount Naeba, a volcano that's been inactive for 200,000 years. It's home to Naeba Ski Area and one of the "hyakumeizan" — Japan's 100 famous mountains.

Spending a night here during the peak winter season doesn't come cheap, and it's recommended that travelers book well in advance. A three-person room was priced at more than 35,000 yen, or about \$320, for a weeknight in February.

Fortunately, the resort is a good option for day-trippers. Driving to Naeba from Tokyo is relatively simple. The

Kanetsu Expressway will take you most of the way, but the last section of road traverses a hillside and is often covered in snow and ice in winter, meaning snow tires or chains are required.

Along the way you might catch sight of snow monkeys scavenging for food on the roadside.

There are parking lots at either end of the complex, but you'll probably need to hike 100 yards or more to get where you're going.

Naeba is a great place to bring small children or people learning to ski or snowboard because there's a wide expanse of low-gradient slopes right next to the hotel.

There's a snow playground and a "magic carpet" conveyor belt-style lift that youngsters can ride while they're learning to shred. Once they get more confident, there are a half-dozen chairlifts in front of the hotel leading to forgiving terrain. There's even a series of small jumps where they can get some air.

If you want to get closer to Naeba's summit, there are a couple of huge gondolas that you can ride from right in front of the hotel. You can also grab some lunch or coffee and check out the view from an Austrian-style restaurant.

There's a fairly flat chairlift near the top of the gondolas that beginner skiers and snowboarders can ride. Experts will enjoy the "black" runs that take them back down to the hotel, but there's also an easier way down for intermediate skiers and snowboarders.

Those into exploring can ride the "Dragonbola" lift over to the nearby

Gakura Ski Area, although it requires a slightly more expensive lift ticket.

When the weather turns bad or energy levels drop, it's easy to take shelter behind the hotel's glass windows.

A large room in one of the buildings contains an artificial-turf ski practice area where very young children can ride down small ramps and plenty of other indoor amusements such as an arts and crafts room where kids can make their own souvenirs.

On the day I visited, they even had free virtual-reality skiing, although I skipped it in favor of the real thing.

There are plenty of Japanese guests at the Naeba Prince, but many of the people there are Chinese. You won't see as many Westerners as you do in a place like Hakuba, but English-speaking ski instructors are available.

A large restaurant at the hotel called the Edelweiss offers energy-rich options for lunch, such as pizza, or waffles with lashings of whipped cream. Lunch won't cost much more than 1,000 yen (\$9.10).

There's also a large food court at one end of the building with vendors selling everything from coffee and crepes to Japanese food.

At the end of a hard day on the slopes, the perfect medicine for bumps and bruises is a soak in a hot spring. Visitors who aren't staying at the hotel can use the onsen next to the food court for about \$5. It's a great feeling to sit in hot water and watch the light fade from the nearby snow-covered mountainside at the end of the day.

robson.seth@stripes.com

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

From Tokyo, take the Kanetsu Expressway to the Tsukiyono Interchange exit, then follow Route 17 for 18 miles to Naeba.

TIMES

Lifts open in the morning and run until 8.30 p.m., although you'll need a night-skiing pass to ski after 5 p.m.

COSTS

Adult lift passes are 5,000 yen during peak season; schoolchildren passes are 4,000 yen, and young children can ride for free. Booking a two- to three-person room in February will cost about 35,000 yen.

FOOD

Twenty on-site restaurants range from a Japanese sushi shop to a pizzeria and a food court.

INFORMATION

princehotels.com/naeba

— Seth Robson

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Pacific



PHOTOS BY TYLER HLAVAC/Stars and Stripes

The recently opened Bamboo Vietnam Kitchen near Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, serves delicious Vietnamese-style sandwiches, greatly expanding the area's ethnic food options.

After Hours: Japan

BY TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

Hungry servicemembers looking for a tasty but healthy meal should check out a new Vietnamese restaurant near the Womble Gate at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan.

Bamboo Vietnam Kitchen has been serving up plenty of delicious Vietnamese-style sandwiches and Pho soup since it opened in late December.

This colorful eatery gets points from the start for offering cuisine you used to not be able to experience without a long trip to Yokohama or Tokyo. Yokosuka's other ethnic food options are rather limited and tend to revolve around curry, pizza or Korean barbecue. As far as I'm aware, it's the only Vietnamese restaurant in Yokosuka, or at least the only one near the base.

The food here is fresh and tasty, but the main draw for me is that it is not heavily fried or greasy. Vietnamese food in general is heavy on vegetables, but it also boasts a good balance of meat that allows food to be tasty but not send you into a food coma in the afternoon. You can eat lunch here and still get things done at work the rest of the day.

Pho and sandwiches are the primary options here, although you can order a salad or a chicken dinner. The sandwiches cost about \$6 or \$7, and a good-sized portion of Pho soup is between \$8 and \$9.

I sampled both the pork sandwich and a bowl of Pho and found them tasty and not too heavy on the wallet or the digestive system. Unlike Japanese ramen, where the noodles are typically made of wheat, Pho noodles are typically made from rice. Although they are not quite as tasty as ramen, they are far easier to digest.

Bamboo Kitchen Vietnam's dishes are available for takeout, or you can stick around and have a fruity Smirnoff Vodka cocktail for about \$6.

The restaurant is comfortable, and the decor very colorful and brightly decorated in Southeast Asian style; the walls and furniture are painted green and yellow, and Vietnamese knickknacks adorn the wall.

The restaurant is usually busy with either American or Vietnamese customers; surprisingly, no Japanese customers were spotted during my visits. The menu is in both English and Japanese.

If you're not terribly hungry, still stop by and have an order of spring rolls, \$4, and a Vietnamese-style coffee.

hlavac.tyler@stripes.com

BAMBOO VIETNAM KITCHEN

Location: Mitsubishi building 1F, 1-24 Odaki-cho, Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Prefecture, 238-0008

Hours: Open daily, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Prices: 480-580 yen for a mixed drink. Most lunch sets cost between 630 yen and 1,500 yen.

Dress: Casual

Directions: Next to Lucky Exchange. A few minutes' walk from Yokosuka Naval Base's Womble Gate.

Information: 045-263-9975; www.facebook.com/bambootgt



A side of spring rolls, above, and a Vietnamese-style chicken sandwich, below, are as fresh and colorful as the Bamboo Vietnam Kitchen itself.



White bean soup, simple dumplings a hearty meal

BY SARA MOULTON
Associated Press

They say that everyone complains about the weather — winter especially — but no one ever does anything about it. Well, here's something you can do that will make you feel much better. Cook up a big hot bowl of Italian soup for dinner, garnished with homemade — and idiot-proof! — dumplings.

Basically, this is a white bean and vegetable soup flavored with pancetta and garlic. It's thickened by pureeing a few cups of the cooked vegetables and stirring them back into the pot — one of my favorite ways to thicken a soup because it's so simple. It also avoids dulling the soup's flavor, which is the problem that crops up when flour or cream is used to do the job. Afterward, you'll stir in some fresh lemon juice as a brightener. This is another of my favorite soup tips.

The pancetta makes its appearance as a supporting player, not the star of the show. If you'd like, you can swap in bacon instead. (Both meats are cured pork from the belly. The difference? Bacon is smoked. Pancetta is not.) And you're welcome to leave out the pork altogether.

The dumplings are comfort food and making them is, as mentioned, a fail-safe proposition. You start with fresh bread crumbs, which require nothing more intricate than pulsing fresh slices of bread in a food processor. (One slice turns into about ½ cup of crumbs.) Then just combine the crumbs with eggs and Parmigiano-Reggiano. You can roll the "dough" into balls and cook them right away, but the work is easier if you park it in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes beforehand.

How to round it out? I recommend a nice green salad. Did someone mention winter? You've neutralized it.

White Bean Soup with Greens and Bread Dumplings

Start to finish: 1 hour, 35 minutes (30 active)

Servings: 4

Ingredients:

2 large eggs

2 cups fresh white or whole-wheat bread crumbs

2 ounces freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh sage

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

4 ounces chopped pancetta

½ cup medium chopped onion

1 cup medium diced carrot

1 ½ cups medium diced fennel

2 teaspoons minced garlic

Two 15-ounce cans white beans, drained and rinsed

4 cups chicken broth

8 ounces baby kale, spinach, or chopped larger greens of your choice

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice or to taste

Kosher salt

Black pepper

Directions:

Lightly beat the eggs. Stir in the crumbs, cheese and sage.

Cover and chill at least 30 minutes. Roll into 12 balls.

In a Dutch oven or large saucepan, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low, add the pancetta and cook, stirring occasionally, until the pancetta is lightly browned, about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove the pancetta with a slotted spoon. Leave all the fat in the pan, add the onion, carrot and fennel, and cook, stirring occasionally, over medium heat, until very lightly browned, 12 to 14 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, 1 minute.

Add the beans and the chicken broth to the saucepan. Bring to a boil, turn down to simmer and cook for 15 minutes. Add the dumplings to the pot and simmer, covered, for 8 minutes.

Transfer 2 cups of the solids with a little of the liquid to a blender and blend until smooth. Return the puree to the pan. Add the kale and pancetta and simmer, stirring, until all the greens are wilted, about 3 minutes. Add the lemon juice; salt and pepper to taste.

Ladle the soup into 4 soup bowls and spoon 3 dumplings into each bowl.



SARA MOULTON/AP

White Bean Soup with Greens and Bread Dumplings is a flavorful, no-fuss way to banish winter for at least one mealtime.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



Sprawling archaeological site draws tourists to southwest Jordan

By NORMA MEYER

The San Diego Union-Tribune

In Jordan's extraordinary rose-red "Lost City" of Petra, I have just huffed up 700 zigzagging stone-carved steps to the ancient mountaintop High Place of Sacrifice with its sacred altar and goat blood drain. And now, along a dirt trail, I rest in a rose-draped souvenir stall while an octogenarian Bedouin woman — who is traditionally clad in a long embroidered madraga dress and grew up in a cave — deftly strings a fragrant necklace of dried cloves to sell me.

Way down below, camels with tasseled bridles emit rumbling, dinosaurlike roars while being led by robed Bedouin tribesmen whose eyes are rimmed in jet-black kohl liner. Other indigenous Bedouins, head scarves atop their flowing ringlets, strangely resemble Johnny Depp's Jack Sparrow as they trot on donkeys ("you want air-conditioned taxi?") past monolithic, 2,000-year-old tombs.

Mystical, mind-blowing Petra literally rocks. Around the first century B.C., the now-extinct Nabataean people ingeniously chiseled the capital of their Arab empire from sheer sandstone cliffs; at times 30,000 inhabitants bustled about the affluent metropolis that was a major trade stopover for incense- and spice-toting camel caravans. Stretching across harsh desert terrain (Petra's archaeological park encompasses 102 square miles), the once-forgotten marvel includes intricate temples; obelisks honoring pagan gods; etchings of snakes, lions and eagles; cave dwellings; a theater; and more than 600 massive burial chambers, all hewn from soaring rock faces that bewitchingly glow in swirling hues of terra cotta, apricot and blush pink.

"Petra is one of the world's biggest mysteries," says Omar, my Jordanian guide with Exodus Travels. "There is no record of history. And 65 percent of Petra is still underneath our feet, hidden by dust."

For almost two weeks, I traverse much of Jordan by bus with Exodus, an adventure company that also brings us 16 intrepid voyagers to the less-visited far reaches of this Middle East nation. Petra is Jordan's primo tourist draw, but elsewhere we're the only ones clambering over archaeological ruins of a mosaic-splashed Roman fort and a Muslim dynasty's frescoed castles in no man's land. History mixes with the present — driving through the bleak parched desert, we pass a sprawling Syrian refugee camp housing 36,000 in rows of white shelters; Jordan has taken in about 1 million people who have fled the war-torn nation to its north.

Before joining our group, I spend two days in the vibrant old quarters of capital Amman and clearly stick out — locals repeatedly ask where I'm from. This is a Muslim country, and when I say America, they all warmly reply, "Welcome to Jordan," often with their hands placed over their hearts. I'm probably welcomed 100 times — in taxis, cafes while I eat mezze plates of hummus and falafel, shops, hookah bars, streets lined with bowing worshippers outside a minaret-topped mosque.

It's the start of a cultural odyssey. With Exodus, I also retrace exploits of Lawrence of Arabia, the dashing British officer who gained fame in World War I for leading the legendary Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Turks. Pre-trip, I re-watched the 1962 Oscar-winning epic "Lawrence of Arabia," so it's eerie to stand in the quiet courtyard of Qasr Al Azraq, the storied black basalt fortress where T.E. Lawrence and his Bedouin troops plotted attacks during the winter of 1917.

Another day, I'm bouncing in the blanketed bed of a Bedouin-driven Toyota pickup tearing across the UNESCO-listed Wadi Rum desert, nicknamed Valley of the Moon for its rippling peach-pink sands pierced by titan sandstone and granite peaks. Lawrence and his guerrilla rebels made their base here in 1917-18, and decades later director David Lean filmed the classic in this otherworldly locale. (Planetwise, Wadi Rum also subbed for Mars in the 2015 Oscar nominee "The Martian.")

Near a commemorative rock carving of Lawrence's face, we stop at a rectangular tent woven

Mystical, mind-blowing PETRA

Tourists walk through the narrow Siq, the same passageway traders took to enter Petra 2,000 years ago.

NORMA MEYER, SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE/TNS

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

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from black goat's hair and occupied by hospitable Bedouins who offer us cardamom-and-sage tea. First, one of them has us stick out our forearms and rolls on a soapylike perfume. "It's gazelle innards," Omar says afterwards. Yuck.

Most of the Bedouins I meet speak only Arabic, so Omar gladly translates. "He says, 'You are a camel.'"

A what?
"It means you are beautiful, because camels are beautiful with their long eyelashes."

I sit my hump down and enjoy the steaming sweet tea, cooked in a charred brass kettle over a rudimentary fire pit. Because Muslims avoid alcohol, tea is a main social drink in Jordan, and you're constantly offered a cup in friendship. (You'll find nonalcoholic beers and nonalcoholic wines on some menus, but the rare place I hoist a glass of Cab is outside Petra's gate at the 2,000-year-old Cave Bar, touted as the world's oldest saloon. Indeed there are spirits; it's a former Nabataean family tomb.)

In Wadi Rum, I sleep inside a goat-hair tent in a rustic Bedouin camp set against wind-buffeting cliffs on the desert floor until at 4 a.m. I am awakened by a distant muezzin's melodic call to prayer and, after that, a rooster's shrill cock-a-doodle-doo.

Next I wake up the entire camp shrieking as I clumsily mount my ride. "Yalla, yalla," Rashid gently urges his herd of five sibling camels, meaning let's go, and soon with just one other traveler, we have the pre-dawn moonscape to ourselves.

Atop cud-chewing Aliya, I hypnotically watch the flaming sunrise turn the unending vastness a radiant gold. For 90 beyond-belief minutes, the only sounds are the camels' feet softly sinking into the powdery dunes and the chirping of Sinai rosefinches.

Every day of our itinerary, we hit an archaeological treasure. I feel like I'm in Italy as I wander the immense 2,000-year-old Roman city of Jerash, dubbed the Pompeii of the Middle East for its well-preserved ruins buried by blown sand for centuries. Cultures humorously collide: Two Bedouins, head-scarfed with red-and-white checkered keffiyehs, toot "Yankee Doodle Dandy" on bagpipes in the Corinthian-columned amphitheater near the chariot hypocausts.

Petra, though, is the jackpot. Abandoned in the seventh century, it was rediscovered by a Swiss explorer in 1812 and became a UNESCO heritage site in 1985. Hidden away, to get to the ancient city, you have to trek through the narrow Siq, a nearly mile-long slot canyon sandwiched by 24-story-high veiny rock edifices and at times only 10 feet wide. Nature-created formations stare down in the shapes of elephants and skulls. At the end, the Siq cracks open to reveal the grandstanding, rock-whittled funerary-urn-crined Treasury, likely a former temple. Harrison Ford hid up to the fantastical facade in the 1989 movie "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" in search of the Holy Grail.

After dark, I return for the corny-cool Petra by Night ceremony. Even with my flashlight I can barely see as I stumble through the Siq, lit only by hundreds of luminaria candles, and then sit in the luminaria-lit dirt in front of the shadowy Treasury. Bedouins play a flute and rababa string instrument before the big reveal — spotlights suddenly bathe the Treasury in changing psychedelic colors.

During two days I walk 23 miles in Petra because the scenes won't quit. On the High Place of Sacrifice climb, I smell the pungent smoke of juniper branches, and soon a Bedouin man is hawking me a morning shot of Arabic coffee heated by a campfire teetering on a killer-view ridge. Later, as my elderly new friend Hammadeh strings that



Left: A Bedouin woman in her souvenir stall along a mountain path in Petra.

Below: A searing sunset adds more magic to the lunar-like Wadi Rum desert.

PHOTOS BY NORMA MEYER, SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE/TNS



Above: A tourist is dwarfed by the rock-sculpted mammoth Monastery, set on a hilltop in Petra.

Left: A Bedouin musician plays a rababa, a traditional instrument that is an Arab fiddle.

Above left: Colored lights and candles illuminate the Treasury building during the thrice-weekly ceremony, Petra by Night.

clover necklace in her ramshackle stall, she tells me through interpreter Omar how she once lived in a cave in Petra and still follows the old ways, herding her sheep and goats. Without tourism, she frets, she has no money. "I thank God. I thank God for everything," she says as I buy three more necklaces.

Petra's most jaw-dropping high place is the Monastery, accessible by hoofing up nearly 1,000 Nabataean-cut steep steps. After the path's last bend, this mammoth stone temple — it's 155 feet wide — magically pops out of a remote mountainside. From the Monastery, I continue ascending a boulder-strewn trail until next to a grazing gray donkey I see a piece of scrap wood lying against a pile of rubble and hand-scratched, "Welcome to Top of the World Cafe" Up further, I reach the "cafe," a tattered, tented platform precariously perched over a rocky ledge in the heavens. And there, a 17-year-old Bedouin named Lost ("because you're always found," he smiles) offers me another cup of tea, this one with a sprig of mint.

KNOW & GO

Exodus Travels offers the 12-day Hidden Treasures of Jordan trip multiple times in 2018. Group size from 4 to 16 people. Prices from \$2,015 include accommodations, breakfasts, some dinners, guide, entrance fees and transportation, excluding international airfare. exodustravels.com. Note that animal rights groups urge tourists to boycott Petra, citing the treatment of pack animals at the site, which it said are whipped, overworked and denied proper water, rest and veterinary treatment.

WEEKEND: MUSIC



FAUX FOLKSY

Justin Timberlake is a song-and-dance sham on 'Man of the Woods'

By MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

When Justin Timberlake suggests he's going back to his roots — as he has in regards to his new album, "Man of the Woods" — what should we take that to mean?

Sure, the pop superstar was born in Memphis, where he says he learned to sing by soaking up Southern music by Johnny Cash and Al Green.

But Timberlake spent a goodly stretch of his youth as a cast member on "The All New Mickey Mouse Club," which means that show business was at least as crucial to his foundation as any fishing trips he might have taken with his beloved grandpappy.

What are the hallmarks of a career in show business, particularly for a young performer? Flexibility and adaptability — skills Timberlake later put to use in 'N Sync as that typically mutable boy band moved with assurance from sleek Europop to glistening white soul to squirming electronic funk.

It's that background that truly shaped the 37-year-old entertainer. And it's that song-and-dance man who we hear most clearly on "Man of the Woods," Timberlake's expertly appointed but emotionally inert homage to the place that he says made him.

For Timberlake, the American South might be home. But more than that it's a collection of sounds and gestures — another piece of "sonic real estate," as he put it in a recent interview with Apple's Zane Lowe, just waiting to be colonized.

As always, his development of the place is an impressive, if shallow, aesthetic achievement.

Working primarily with his old friends Timbaland and the Neptunes, he blends gleaming synths with lush country vocal har-

Justin Timberlake

Man of the Woods (RCA)

monies and layers twangy guitars over percolating electronic beats in tunes like "Flannel" and "Livin' Off the Land."

Chris Stapleton stops by for a duet on "Say Something," extending the bromance that began when Timberlake joined the bearded country star on the CMA Awards stage in 2015; Stapleton co-wrote two additional songs on "Man of the Woods," including "Morning Light," a shuffling soul cut featuring Alicia Keys.

Raphael Saadiq, the great R&B veteran, is also in the mix, playing deeply funky bass in "Wave" — one more sign that Timberlake will spare no expense to get the stage dressing right.

None of this, apart from the trap-inspired "Supplies," has much to do with the current Top 40. That comes as something of a surprise given the obvious thirst for a hit the singer demonstrated less than two years ago when he reteamed with Max Martin, his former 'N Sync producer, for the precision-crafted "Can't Stop the Feeling!"



WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

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But that's OK. Sometimes an artist needs to venture from the established path to find his way to somewhere more personal or idiosyncratic.

Only that's not what happens here.

As clever as the production can be, "Man of the Woods" contains Timberlake's least convincing singing; in song after song, there's a glazed-over quality to his vocals that defeats the idea that he's drawing from some raw-water reservoir of cherished down-home memories.

And his lyrics are even worse, with flimsy clichés about country life — "Breeze Off the Pond" rhymes that phrase with "trees on the lawn" — and no shortage of condescension to those well-meaning simpletons struggling out in the heartland.

"Sometimes it's hard / The backed-up bills on the credit card," he actually sings in "Livin' Off the Land," which opens, believe it or not, with a bit of sound from the History Channel's "Mountain Men."

In "Flannel," the ratty shirt in question serves as a metaphor for the comfort that Timberlake and his wife, Jessica Biel (who delivers a spoken intro), provide each other.

But again, Timberlake's language is so faux-folksy — there's mention of a "fancy record company man" — that all you hear is his remove from the world he says he's trying to honor.

So why is Timberlake so much less successful in this mode than in the others he's taken up?

Maybe he thought he didn't need to work as hard as he has in the past, since this is familiar territory. Maybe he oversold the album's concept in the unintentionally laughable video clip he used to announce "Man of the Woods," which had him inhaling campfire smoke and striking messianic poses in a river.

Or maybe he's conflicted about his real feelings on the South. Last week, several news outlets reported that Timberlake had co-written the scuzz "Sauce" with Toby Keith, the polarizing (and often misunderstood) country star known for playing President Trump's inauguration concert last year.

Keith isn't credited in the album's liner notes, but his name does appear in an entry for the song on ASCAP's website. Timberlake's representatives didn't respond within 24 hours to my request for clarification on the matter, which raises the possibility that, with Keith, Timberlake got more of a red-state assist than he bargained for.

That's how this Southern misadventure comes across anyway: as a flashy Hollywood depiction full of local color but minus any feeling for the complexity of the place.



EDGE PUBLICITY/TNS



Camila Cabello

Camila (SYCO/Epic)

They might have been disvised through NBC's "The X Factor" in 2012, but hit-making girl-group Fifth Harmony is hardly a tidy proposition unless planned obsolescence was part of the deal

(Lauren Jauregui just signed to do a solo album). Blame Camila Cabello for being the upstart in that revolution.

As the most charismatic and dramatic member of the group, Cabello has set out to make edgier solo endeavors and move away from the clean dance-soul clutches of Fifth Harmony. Oddly enough, the edge she goes for on "Camila" is quiet simplicity — subtle washes of Latin flavor, blissed-out emotional vocals (to

go with her equally driven lyrics), and understated production. Once past her zesty rap-banging (and surprisingly romantic) "Havana" with Young Thug, the rest of Cabello's solo debut is tender to the touch. Somewhat, yet deeply passionate, ballads such as "Consequences" and acoustic folkie moments "Real Friends" and "All These Years" show off her theatricality in hushed tones rather than grand fashion. "She Loves Control" humbly looks at

the need for individuality within girl-group conformity. Although she's only 20, Cabello wants to sing about a past, a heritage, and her history, all of which flavors "Inside Out," and every element of "Camila." And here's something else — there's not a bum cut on the album, which made its debut atop the Billboard charts. That's pretty great for any artist at any age.

— A.D. Amorosi
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Beth Hart & Joe Bonamassa

Black Coffee (J&R Adventures)

Beth Hart and Joe Bonamassa's third studio album of mostly soul and blues sticks to the formula of "if it's not broken, don't fix it," and it serves them well. Hart, a powerful singer also capable of nuance, is a good fit with Bonamassa, a guitar whiz with a wide range of sounds. They are bonded by their shared intensity, and the well-chosen repertoire, including many lesser-known tunes, gives them 10 opportunities to realize their potential.

Etta James songs are a staple of the duo and here they take on "Damn Your Eyes," from 1989's "Seven Year Itch." R&B diva Lavern Baker gets two nods, "Soul on Fire" and "Saved," while "Lullaby of the Leaves," a ballad with a scorching Bonamassa solo à la Gary Moore, dates back to the early 1930s.

Other songs include "Joy" from Lucinda Williams, Kansas Joe McCoy's "Why Don't You Do Right," and the title track, Ike & Tina Turner via Steve Marriott. Horn arrangements from Lee Thornburg, tasteful backing vocals and excellent keyboard



parts from Reese Wynans, who used to play with Stevie Ray Vaughan, all help "Black Coffee" percolate into a tasty brew.

Album closer "Addicted" is a gem, originally released in 2007 by Austria's Waldeck. It has elements of a James Bond theme, shades of the tango and, unsurprisingly, a European vibe. Hart imbues it with passion, as do the Bonamassa and Wynans solos.

The world is full of little underappreciated treasures. If Hart & Bonamassa and producer Kevin Shirley can keep finding them, there's a bright future in the grooves for more albums like this truly fine effort.

— Pablo Gorondi
Associated Press

David Duchovny

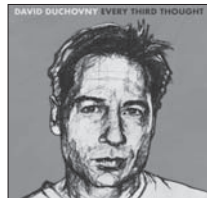
Every Third Thought (King Baby/GMG)

In an upcoming episode of "The X-Files," Fox Mulder gets mixed up with paranormal forces and somehow believes he's a rock 'n' roll god. No, wait. That's not a TV show. It's apparently real life for David Duchovny.

Duchovny ditched his day job chasing aliens on television to release his sophomore effort, "Every Third Thought," an album of pretty good rock songs marred by perhaps the worst vocal performances ever captured digitally.

This album is like listening to the stragglers of an office party ending up at a karaoke bar at 3 a.m. when that weird dude from accounts payable grabs the mic to live out his rock dreams in a beer-induced semi-coma.

Duchovny has a horrifically thin voice, unable to modulate, unable to show any emotion, unable to hold a note. It doesn't go up or down. It just sits there croaking like a dying frog. He hasn't improved since his debut 2015 album, "Hell or Highwater," which we gave him a pass on because, hey, everyone makes



mistakes.

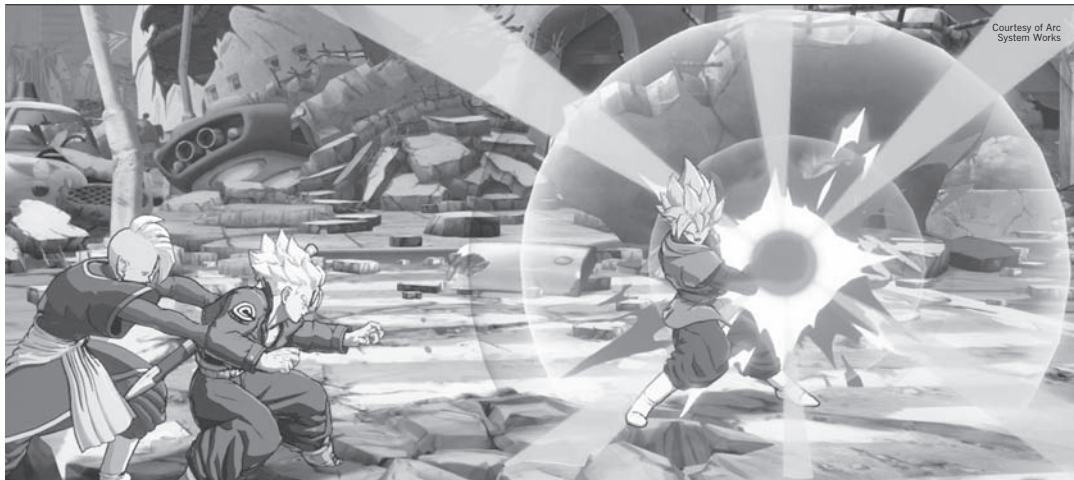
The second one is a blemish on a really good band, including multi-instrumentalists Colin Lee, Pat McCusker and Mitchell Stewart, and Sebastian Modak on drums. They deserve better. Forget the truth: a true vocalist is out there, guys.

The ballad "Maybe I Can't" is agonizing, like listening to an under-rehearsed third grader pushed onstage for a talent show. "Spiral" is a guitar-heavy, jammy tune horribly disfigured by one thing — Duchovny.

Dude. Can't. Sing. Make him stop.

Send in the aliens.
— Mark Kennedy
Associated Press

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Courtesy of Arc System Works

FIGHTING BLISS

Fans old and new will find something to enjoy in 'Dragon Ball FighterZ'

By BLAKE MORSE/Shacknews.com

Let me take you back to the '90s, an era when anime could pretty much only be found at Blockbuster. Video and interest in Japanese cartoons was considered a hobby only for the socially inept. This was around the time I had my first exposure to the Dragon Ball franchise in the form of imported Super Famicom fighting games. These 2-D brawlers were like nothing I'd seen state-side. Who were these characters with spiky blonde hair, and how could throwing fireballs be as simple as pushing a button?

Raising power levels

"Dragon Ball FighterZ" feels like it draws from those classic games while also taking a lot of cues from modern fighting titles. Many features remind me specifically of the Marvel vs. Capcom franchise, like the straightforward combo system and tag-team mechanics. Basic combos can be accomplished by tapping a button several times, meaning just about anyone can pick up a controller and pull off some impressive-looking moves. Throwing down super and meteor attacks are the same for all characters as well.

There's a learning curve to mastering the basics, but it's the smallest, most approachable curve in a fighting game I've seen in awhile. Fans of any age should be able to jump in and get going in no time. That's not saying that "Dragon Ball FighterZ" is without nuance. Once the basics are mastered, there's a deeper layer of countering, combo-ing and timing teammate support moves that advanced players will appreciate.

There are some nice touches and one particularly unique modifier to some fights. Much like in the *Injustice* series, some levels have transitions or destructive finishes that can

be activated by knocking out opponents with a power move. In some instances, if the right characters have been selected, players may also experience executions adapted straight out of the anime series, such as Kid Gohan taking out Cell with a one-handed kamehameha.

Depending on what mode is being played, there's even a chance to collect all seven dragon balls and summon the dragon Shenron. Once summoned, Shenron grants one of four wishes like reviving a downed teammate or boosting health or power. It's definitely a feature unique to "FighterZ" that can help even the playing. In fact, many of the game's core mechanics seem designed to keep the balance between casual and hardcore player in check.

An animation sensation

Visually, you could not ask for a better marriage of Arc System Works' animation and cel shading. Characters and backgrounds look like they were taken straight out of the show and given an HD update. So many nice touches have been made to make "Dragon Ball FighterZ" look as good as it plays, like the way new fighters zoom onto the battlefield after an ally falls or the animations for

Fast forward to now and everyone knows about Goku, his ragtag band of allies and the many eyebrow twitches they've all made throughout the years. New consoles emerged and trends changed, the Dragon Ball fighting games grew in popularity, went 3-D and evolved into something new that didn't derive from the "Street Fighters" and "Mortal Kombat" of the last era. While titles like "Dragon Ball Xenoverse" have done a great job in capturing the essence of the series, there hasn't been a game that really scratched my itch for a fighter like those old Famicom games. That is until "Dragon Ball FighterZ" made the scene.



each character's super moves. The added bonus of the original Japanese voice cast just adds to the enveloping nature of the game's overall design.

Even though the animations for story mode specifically can be limited at times, they still look fantastic. Character models are expressive and though there are still some clipping moments like most cel-shaded titles, they're much smaller and harder to notice than in many titles, including "Xenoverse."

Gameplay modes are varied and scaled for varying ability with very little punishment for not being at a certain level of

adeptness. For instance, arcade mode has a system that bases the next opponent on what grade a team gets at the end of a match. "S"-rank players will go on to face a more challenging AI opponent in the next round while lower grades take on a more approachable enemy.

Almost every Dragon Ball game I've ever played has done a great job of putting players into historical moments from throughout the series. But playing through the Super Saiyan saga for the umpteenth time just to get to the meat and potatoes of a game has definitely become laborious over the years. Refreshingly, "Dragon Ball FighterZ" doesn't retell the same old story, but rather integrates the player into a brand new tale that heavily references from canon.

Summoning the dragon

If there is one glaring flaw to "Dragon Ball FighterZ," it would have to be the inclusion of capsule-corp-style loot crates over a more open in-game store. Capsules only contain items for the social hub area, like character avatars and character titles, and cost only a small amount of in-game currency to purchase, so

So many nice touches have been made to make "Dragon Ball FighterZ" look as good as it plays.

it's not like there's a "Battlefront 2" level of controversy here. Still, it would've been nice if I could've used the money I earned to buy the items I wanted over going in completely blind.

At the end of the day, "Dragon Ball FighterZ" is a game made for fans of the series. It does a great job of keeping itself accessible to a wide age range and scale of ability. Beyond the essential inclusion of Goku, Vegeta, and their respective progeny, the roster has a decent selection of friends and enemies from throughout the series, including newer characters like Beerus and Hit, without getting weighed down by overinclusion (did anyone really want to play as every member of the Ginyu force?).

This is truly the best Dragon Ball fighter I've played since the Super Famicom imports. It's pure fighting bliss that makes you feel as powerful as the characters on the slay by adding so much style and flair. Longtime fans and newer fans who might only be familiar with "Dragon Ball Super" will find something to enjoy here if they're fans of fighters.

One caveat to my review: On-line mode was not available when I reviewed the game.

Online: bandainamcoent.com/games/dragon-ball-fighterz

WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

"Only the Brave": Joseph Kosinski's "Only the Brave" is a deeply moving recounting of the events leading up to the death of 19 firefighters, known as the Granite Mountain Hotshots, while trying to protect the small town of Yarnell, Ariz., in 2013. A series of unfortunate events put the crack firefighting team in the path of a massive fire that overwhelmed them, leaving only one survivor. "Only the Brave" is a reminder of what real heroes look like and how they act. They can be your friends and neighbors who are only different in how they don't hesitate when there is a chance to help others. The loss of one such hero is a tragedy. The loss of 19 is a devastating moment in time that should be honored with this kind of loving film tribute.



PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP

Julianne Moore, left, and Matt Damon in a scene from "Suburicon."

Also available on DVD:
"Suburicon": A perfect suburban world in 1959 hides dark secrets.
"L.B.": Woody Harrelson stars in this film that follows Lyndon B. Johnson as he goes from being a powerful Senate majority leader to a powerless vice president.

"The Jackie Gleason Show in Color": This variety series starring Jackie Gleason was filmed in Miami.

"Keep Watching": Home invaders force a family to play a game of kill or be killed.

"Walking Out": A son must find a way to help his father after a terrible accident. Matt Bomer stars.

"24 Hours to Live": Assassin is brought back to life and given 24 hours to get revenge for his death.

"War of the Worlds: The Complete Series": The TV series is based on the novel by H.G. Wells.

"Day of the Dead: Bloodline": Survivors fighting the walking dead discover what they know about the killer creatures is wrong.

"Battle Creek": Young man who can't go out in sunlight meets someone who brings sunshine into his world.

"Kill Order": Chaos erupts when armed men break into a high school classroom.

"Homeland: Season 6": Carrie (Claire Danes) gets involved with the aftereffects of the U.S. presidential election.

"Duckman: The Complete Series": Jason Alexander provides the voice of the rude, lewd defective detective.

"All I See Is You: Blind women see the world differently once she regains her sight. Blake Lively stars.

"Bosom Buddies: The Complete Series": Network comedy series that launched the career of Tom Hanks.

"All I See Is You: Blind women see the world differently once she regains her sight. Blake Lively stars.

"The Guardian: The Complete Series": Nick Fallin (Simon Baker) is a hotshot attorney busted on a drug charge and ordered to perform 1,500 hours of community service. He uses that time to help the less fortunate.

—Rick Bentley/Tribune News Service

By DAVID BETANCOURT

The Washington Post

When actress Candice Patton was cast as Iris West on The CW series "The Flash" back in 2014, she was not sure what she was jumping into.

She knew the basics: Iris West was a classic DC Comics character (debuting in Showcase No. 4 back in 1956). She's one of the most important women in the DC universe, and the status of her on-and-off romance with the Flash always has an impact on his heroics. But Patton says she wasn't prepared for the fanboy blowback she got for being an African-American actress cast in a role that had always been a white woman.

Actors of color had taken on white comic-book roles before. Samuel L. Jackson is Nick Fury in Marvel Studios' movie machine. Lawrence Fishburne played Daily Planet editor Perry White in the 2013 Superman movie "Man of Steel." Patton figured her casting wouldn't be a big deal because of her race.

"I think I was too naive ... to prepare for what was coming," Patton said while in Washington, D.C., recently for the DC Comics event "DC in D.C." "I think it was shocking when I got the role and understood that a lot of people weren't happy with it. Not a lot, but there was this subset of people that didn't want to see that. But change is difficult for people, as we're noticing in our political climate. People are always going to fight against change. But I think I've kind of solidified the role, and it doesn't bother me anymore."

"Now, it's just kind of set in stone that I'm Iris West," Patton added. "That's a really cool thing that young girls (of color) can see themselves as the ingenue."

"The Flash" currently airing its fourth season on The CW, originally spun off from The CW's "Arrow" and has turned into arguably the network's most popular superhero show. Patton's Iris West recently married the titular hero Barry Allen (played by Grant Gustin) at the end of an annual crossover that involves four of The CW's DC-inspired shows.

The news comes after three seasons of will-they-won't-they and both characters having other romantic interests. But Patton says she doesn't think there will be any less drama in the lives.

"We've had three years of bumps between Barry and Iris, so I'm happy that they're finally married and in love and everything seems to be going well," Patton said. "I think they'll be conflict outside of themselves and that will be enough to entertain viewers. Hopefully. As far as Barry and Iris, I always want to see them as a solid unit."



'It's a great thing'

Actress got past the controversy and turned Iris West into a groundbreaking role

As for those crossovers between "The Flash" and The CW's other superhero series that now film in Vancouver annually, Patton says to enjoy them, because they're not easy to make. "The scheduling is the hard thing. I don't know how we do it every year," Patton said. "And every year it's bigger and more complex. And every year I think we all get really, really nervous around that time. We know we're not going to be sleeping. We're all going to be a little grumpy. It's very difficult. A lot of coffee (is involved)."

One crossover Patton won't have to worry about is "The Flash" characters entering the DC movie universe, which was a hot rumor when "The Flash" began airing. There were many fans hoping it would happen. Patton says "The Flash" cast knew

right away it was never meant to be.

Those rumors ended quickly when Ezra Miller was cast as the Flash in "Justice League" shortly after the Gustin-starring CW series began. But the show had one strong influence on casting in the Scarlet Speedster's future movie universe: an African-American actress, Kiersey Clemons, was cast as Iris West in the Flash movie, which is now reportedly being directed by John Francis Daley and Jonathan Goldstein. Patton says she's proud her casting might have had something to do with that.

"If my casting wasn't working, they would have changed it for the film," Patton said. "Generations after this will remember Iris West as black, whether that's me, or someone else playing (the role) in the film. It's a great thing."

Candice Patton is Iris West on "The Flash." The show airs Sundays on AFN-Spectrum. The CW

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

Is hunger a constant companion?

Understanding and overcoming obstacles to healthy eating

By CARRIE DENNETT ■ *Special to The Washington Post*

“Why am I constantly hungry?” is a question I hear from many of my patients. At best, constant hunger is annoying and distracting; at worst, it’s a sign that something’s amiss. Either way, the mental wrestling can make it hard to trust the messages your body is sending you. Assuming that you’re eating regularly through the day, there are several possible explanations why hunger might be a constant companion.

You’re not getting enough protein at meals

Of the three macronutrients — carbohydrates, protein and fat — protein contributes the most to satiety, the feeling that you’ve eaten enough. That doesn’t mean you should go overboard on protein — you need the nutritional variety from all three macronutrients — but making sure to include some protein in each meal and snack could keep you satisfied longer. That could be eggs, yogurt, tofu, beans, fish, chicken or meat. Experiment to see how you feel after eating different meals.

Your gut microbiota isn’t diverse enough

Your gut, and the microbes that dwell in it, act as a “mini brain,” influencing, among other things, mood, appetite and food cravings. The microbes in our gut produce a number of compounds, including some that are identical or similar to appetite hormones. About 20 minutes after a meal, certain bacteria in your gut send signals that you’ve had enough to eat. But if you don’t have a very diverse microbiota, other species can become dominant, and what they need to survive and thrive might be different from what your body needs.

When you and a dominant group of microbes aren’t on the same page, they will try to manipulate your eating behavior for their benefit. They might cause cravings for their preferred foods, or for foods that suppress their competitors. They might simply increase your hunger levels until you eventually eat what they want you to eat.

Support a diverse microbiota by eating foods rich in fiber and probiotic bacteria, being physically active, handling stress and getting adequate sleep. This reduces the chance that any single species will have the numbers to gain an upper hand, and might help reduce food cravings and unusual hunger.

You aren’t sleeping enough

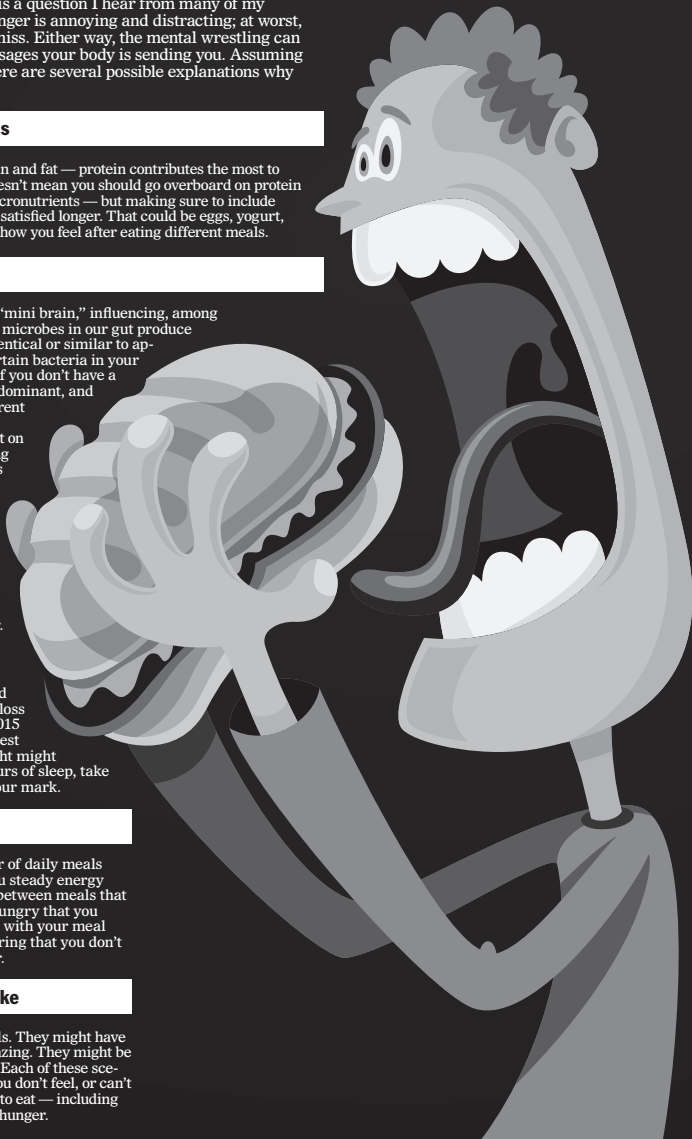
Chronically skimping on sleep can lead to increased hunger and carbohydrate cravings, possibly due to loss of REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. Results of a 2015 study published in the journal *Sleep Medicine* suggest that the loss of our final REM sleep cycle of the night might lead to a bigger appetite. If you get less than six hours of sleep, take note: The final REM cycle begins around the six-hour mark.

You need to eat more often

There are many opinions about the optimal number of daily meals and snacks. Your ideal meal frequency will give you steady energy throughout the day and let you get hungry enough between meals that you feel ready to eat a nourishing meal but not so hungry that you are ready to eat the first thing you see. Experiment with your meal frequency to see what feels right for you, remembering that you don’t want to eat so frequently that you never feel hunger.

You don’t really know what hunger feels like

Many people have lost touch with their hunger signals. They might have a longtime habit of skipping meals, or of constant grazing. They might be a chronic dieter, or have a chaotic home or work life. Each of these scenarios can silence hunger signals over time. When you don’t feel, or can’t identify, true hunger, you might mistake other urges to eat — including cravings, emotions or the need for stimulation — for hunger.



WEEKEND: FAMILY

Preemie stress test

Dads often struggle after high-risk babies come home

By DANIELLE BRAFF
Chicago Tribune

Baby Ava weighed 2 pounds, 15 ounces when she was born 10 weeks early after her mother had preeclampsia. When she was born in 2014, she didn't move or cry initially. Ava's skin was too sensitive for clothing, her parents couldn't hold her, and she was connected to all kinds of wires and monitors. After a five-week stay in the neonatal intensive care unit, where each day was a struggle, the Illinois couple got to bring their baby home — but after getting accustomed to having help from monitors, they knew the transition wouldn't be easy.

"She wouldn't be connected to monitors to tell us if she's still breathing; we won't have nurses constantly monitoring her," said Ava's dad, Irwin Obispo, a pharmacist manager at a local retail pharmacy. "The stress of having to take care of a preemie with all the extra monitoring and attention to care is highly overwhelming."

There also was sleep loss paired with a day job and worries about his wife, plus the knowledge that the family had narrowly slipped through some very dangerous territory at the hospital.

"I may have physically endured pain, but the emotional and mental pain of possibly losing his family is equally as hard," said Michelle Obispo about her husband.

Contrary to popular belief, it's the fathers whose stress levels rise when bringing premature NICU babies home from the hospital — while the mothers' stress levels stay constant, according to a new study by researchers at Northwestern Medicine.

They found that before being discharged from the NICU, both parents had high levels of cortisol, the stress hormone. But during the two weeks after being discharged, the mothers' stress levels returned to normal, while the fathers' continued to rise.

When the babies are in the hospital, they're cared for by a team of nurses and physicians, said Craig Garfield, lead author of the study, and associate professor of pediatrics and medical social sciences at Northwestern University.

"When the baby comes home, suddenly baby needs care and support, mom needs care and support, and dad may still be trying to juggle work and his growing home responsibilities," said Garfield, who also is an attending physician at Lurie Children's Hospital.

Mothers also tend to process the situation long before fathers do, which might account for their being able to adjust faster, said Anna-Marie Rodney, owner of Chicago Family Doula.



Above: Irwin Obispo plays with older daughter Ava in their home on Jan. 21 in Orlando Hills, Ill. Ava was born 10 weeks premature.

Left inset: Irwin, his wife Michelle Obispo and daughters Ava, 3, and Olivia, 6 months.

PHOTOS BY JAMES C. SVEHLA,
CHICAGO TRIBUNE/TNS

haven't been studied much until now.

"It's largely misunderstood, but fathers also experience perinatal mood and anxiety disorders," Howard said.

About 1 in 7 women will experience postpartum depression, and 1 in 10 men will also experience it. A NICU stay is one of the factors related to postpartum depression, and it could affect men and women, Howard said.

Fathers often are the first to see their preemies or sick children in the NICU because the mother is still in the recovery room. Fathers also watch emergency C-sections, and they are there during the crisis, while the mother might be under anesthesia or might not be as aware of what's happening.

"If the birth was traumatic — for instance, if the baby was resuscitated — then dads may be exposed and more aware of the baby's health concerns," Howard said. "This can lead dads to experience symptoms of PTSD, as well."

But postpartum depression and stress symptoms after childbirth typically manifest differently in dads than in moms.

Men will often be angry, irritable, will be more likely to abuse alcohol or other substances, and will withdraw and be alone, said Crystal Clancy, executive director of community engagement at Pregnancy & Postpartum Support Minnesota.

They should seek professional help immediately, as they need to be healthy to properly care for their infant.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Putting positive spin on military sacrifices

My mother, a retired first-grade teacher, has always put a positive spin on things that appeared to be sad, unjust, terrifying or disgusting. I've always admired her capacity to see the good in all things, but there are times when this ability seems out of reach.

On a mud-splattered, drizzly Monday morning in February, my mother would hear birds singing. Along a litter-strewn highway dotted with decrepit strip malls, my mother would spy Queen Anne's lace growing in a nearby ditch. If I served my mother a revolting casserole made from two weeks of mediocre leftovers, she would delight at the colorful pimientos. My mother could encounter a great big pile of excrement, and chances are, she would point out the "skat's" scientific benefits — fertilization, seed distribution or composting. I know, because she's actually done this. Many times.

Having been a military spouse for 24 years, I found it difficult to channel my mother's relentless positivity. Military moves, separations and inadequate pay were like big piles of excrement plopped down into our path. As far as I could tell, there were no benefits. These inevitable hardships were the sacrifices of military service.

But just because I couldn't see a bright side doesn't mean there wasn't one.

Take PCS moves, for example. After I packed up my entire household, left my job and everything I had come to know, said goodbye to good friends and our favorite pizza joint, was I supposed to see rainbows and unicorns?

No, because there were no unicorns and rainbows, but there were certainties of PCS moves. A fresh start, a clean slate, or a reset was sometimes just what our family needed. Our first move overseas gave my husband and I an opportunity to travel together, rather than spending all our vacations with extended family. Our orders to move from England were a ticket out of my tedious obligations as Parliamentarian of the Spouse's School. When we moved away from Virginia, we were relieved to get our son out of the school where he had been bullied. Our move from Germany enabled me to break up with the hairdresser who had turned my hair an unnatural shade of yellow-orange. During our move to Florida, the movers finally broke that microwave cart I always hated anyway.

With each move, we were given a unique opportunity to reinvent ourselves, our routines and our living situations. And in that way, moving was actually a good thing.

Let's face it: military pay grades are not the stuff that dreams are made of. My minivan with 215,000 miles on it and interior carpeting that smells like pickled eggs is proof that military families aren't wealthy. However, receiving military pay that is a matter of public record has its benefits, too. We never had to wonder how we stacked up to our military peers. Minivans, potluck and bill-splitting were never frowned upon. There was no competition or pretentiousness. And in that way, military pay was actually a good thing.

Believe it or not, even military separations offer something positive. Aside from the obvious "absence makes the heart grow fonder" phenomenon, there's also crumbs, clickers and communication to appreciate. Men are crumb-producing machines, and during the times that my husband was deployed or on travel, I relished my crumb-free existence. I also savored full reign over the television clicker. But best of all, my husband and I communicated best when he was away. We emailed and called often, and never forgot to say, "I love you." And in that way, military separations were a very good thing.

Artists say that the lump of plaster is a masterpiece because "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Real estate agents will tell you that the old shack is "a charming Cape Cod." And my mother will tell you that the dog who you just stepped in is an essential element of the circle of life.

Families enduring the challenges of military life can put a positive spin on their world. No matter how dark it seems, as long as the sun shines, there is a bright side.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

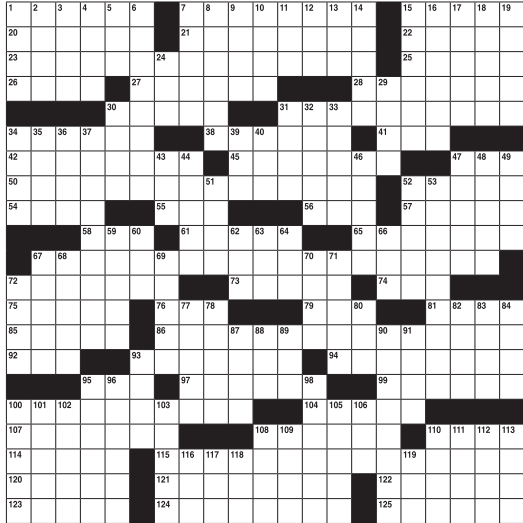
WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

CRACKING WISE

BY DAVID LEVINSON WILK / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

- ACROSS**
- 1 52-story Boston skyscraper, familiarly
7 Brass instrument with a mellow sound
15 ____ Malfroy, student at Hogwarts
20 Sorkin and Spelling
21 Kind of equinox
22 Puerto ____
23 "Stop! You're killing me!"
25 ____garde
26 Give some lip
27 Uncut
28 More than willing
30 For whom the Lorax speaks
31 Internet home to "Between Two Ferns"
34 Latin for "womb"
38 Monsieur's mate
41 Y or N, maybe
42 Shakespeare character who says, "This above all to thine own self be true"
45 Actor Jason
47 Zugspitze, e.g.
50 A person skilled at deadpan has one
52 What "4" may stand for
54 French river or department
55 Beeseech
56 Advert's ending?
- 57 Designer Geoffrey
58 Carrier to Karachi
61 Tugboat sounds
63 Decked out
67 Unimpressed response
to someone's one-liner
72 ____ intolerance
73 Novo-Ogaryovo is the official one of the Russian president
74 Lavatory sign
75 Hawke of "Training Day"
76 Regrettable
79 Broadway's Hagen
81 "Roméo et Juliette" segment
85 Coin-toss call
86 Stand-up chain started in Los Angeles
92 Big engine additive
93 Log-in needs
94 Verbally assail
95 "Iglu," for "igloo": Abbr.
97 Cover over, in a way
99 Start limping
100 It might involve someone being "so poor" or "so old"
104 ____ amigo?
107 Count ____
108 Nail-salon employees, at times
110 Its "reeds are a pain / And the fingering's insane," per Ogden Nash
114 Lipinski and Reid
115 "Jeez ... lighten up!"
120 Be grandiloquent
- 121 To this day, Marie Curie's are still radioactive
122 Mystery
123 Lacoste and Descartes
124 Star of 1976's Oscar winner for Best Picture
125 Smoothed in a shop
- DOWN**
- 1 One body art, for short
2 "Hilarious!"
3 Noteworthy times
4 Lobster traps
5 Med. professionals who take a pledge named for Florence Nightingale
6 Welcomes
7 Plaster
8 Condition for filmdom's Rain Man
9 Suffix with speed
10 "Oh, what the hell ... I'll do it!"
11 "Uh, you've told me quite enough!"
12 Where Michael Jordan played coll. ball
13 Meadow call
14 Poet Ginsberg
15 "Game of Thrones" creature
16 Joan who quipped "A Peeping Tom looked in my window and pulled down the shade"
17 "Pick ____"
18 "Pretty please?"
19 Doing a piroquette, say
24 Poison ivy, e.g.
- 29 Some sneakers
30 Something carried onstage?
31 "Terri!"
32 Fifth category of taste with a Japanese name
33 "Peter ____ Greatest Hits" (1974 album)
34 High hairstyle
35 Doughnut figures
36 Late '50s singing sensation
37 One of many scattered in a honeymoon suite, maybe
39 Light bark
40 Cry from Homer
43 Kind of port for a flash drive
44 Manage
46 Night vision?
47 Bowl
48 Maid's armful
49 Made an appeal
51 Hymn starter
52 Habitation
53 Around the time of birth
59 Chains
60 Car-rental giant
62 Poet who wrote "Fortune and love favor the brave"
63 Org. that offers Pre-emptment
64 ____ fly
66 One on the left: Abbr.
67 Greatly bother
68 TV blocking device
69 Tops
70 Finish all at once, in a way



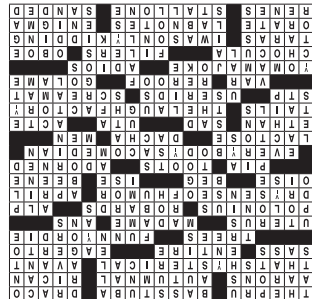
- 71 Things taken by government officials
72 "Sounds like a plan!"
77 "Don't be ____!"
78 ____ Walcott, Nobel Prize-winning poet
80 Patriots' org.
82 Bad state to be in
83 Mine transport
84 Modern party summons
87 Euros replaced them
88 Bustle
89 Grp. that puts on a show
90 Fleets
91 Wall St. bigwigs
93 Like Mount Narodnya
95 Empty
96 Brings a smile to
98 Like some angels and dominoes
100 Champion
101 Airport that J.F.K. dedicated in 1963
102 Erin of "Joanie Loves Chachi"
103 Locks up
105 Conceot
106 Bug
108 Jester
109 Feeling
110 Anthony Hopkins' "Thor" role
111 City NNE of San Anone
112 "My treat!"
113 "My stars!"
116 Cambodia's Angkor
117 Court org.
118 Skit show, for short
119 What makes you yow?

GUNSTON STREET



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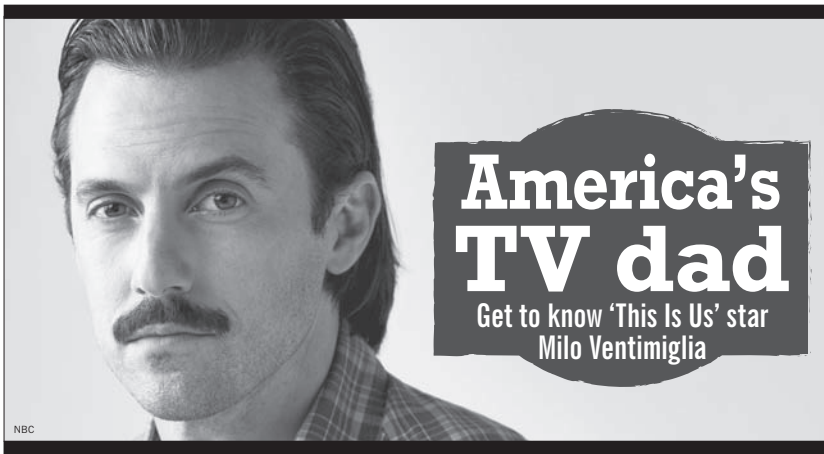
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FACES



BY YVONNE VILLARREAL
Los Angeles Times

It's just after 1 a.m. and Milo Ventimiglia, finally settling into his Minneapolis hotel room after a climactic Super Bowl night, can at long last sleep with one less secret to keep.

"I'm happy everyone is in the know," he says by phone.

As flawed-but-nearly-perfect patriarch Jack Pearson on NBC's megahit "This Is Us" (resuming Feb. 21 on AFN-Pulse), Ventimiglia has joined the roster of TV's most beloved dads. So beloved, in fact, that the character's death, revealed in the show's debut season, and the mystery surrounding it, kindled the question, "How did Jack die?" It quickly became a pop culture phenomenon rife with conspiracy theories.

On Sunday in the U.S., the answer came.

(This is where the spoilers start.)

With its plum post-Super Bowl slot, the time-jumping, twist-friendly family drama once and for all revealed that Jack died of cardiac arrest after inhaling smoke while saving his family's dog — and a few other things — as a fire, sparked by a faulty slow cooker, ravaged the Pearson home.

"He got the dog!" the 40-year-old actor exclaims, still lively after a long night that included an appearance on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon." "And he got everything else out. He got the moon necklace. He got the photo albums. Like, come on, Jack. Really?" (Take heart: Just because the mystery has been solved, the character won't be disappearing.)

The episode, which stands as the most-watched post-Super Bowl entertainment telecast in six years, with an average of 27 million viewers, had fans reaching for tissue boxes — and their mobile devices. Barely halfway into the episode, Twitter was already reporting it was the most-tweeted episode to date in the show's two-season run.

But in the spirit of the show, let's flash back to a few days earlier, when Ventimiglia was riding out the last days of the mystery at his home in Los Angeles. (And

because you're probably wondering: Yes, his smoke detectors have batteries — "I change them regularly" — and, yes, the two slow cookers in his kitchen function properly.)

The actor — who up until now has been best known for his roles as Jess Mariano, the moody bad-boy boyfriend to Rory in "Gilmore Girls," and Peter Petrelli, the medical caregiver with superhuman powers in "Heroes" — is very much like the genial, family man-type character he currently portrays. A floor-to-ceiling photo collage of friends and family lines a wall in his kitchen. He built part of his backyard patio with his father. Peter's names are inscribed in the concrete footings. And as a hobbyist photographer, he is known to take pictures and gift them as keepsakes.

Ask Ventimiglia in what ways he's most like Jack and he'll start off with their differences. "I'm not an alcoholic, so I don't think I'm like him in that way," he says. "My parents didn't drink, and it was never anything I was raised around, so it just, it never factored into my life. ... How we're alike? I'd like to think I care about the people I love, like Jack does."

But more than living up to a fictional character, Ventimiglia is trying to fill the shoes of his parents — his mother, Carol, a retired teacher, and his father, Peter, a Vietnam veteran who was in the printing business before he retired.

"I still want to be my dad," he says, flashing his signature crooked smile. "Growing up, my father represented this person of strength, of character. I saw not only the way he would talk to other people and his family but also how people would talk about him. People love my father — people love my mother. For me, it's always been, 'I want to live up to that.'"

Any resemblance to the creator of "Gilmore Girls" and a longtime friend, can attest that he does — and not simply because he's the one who persuaded her to stop consuming energy drinks.

"If you know Milo the way I know Milo — I always say that I could never have kids, because I could never be guaranteed that they would turn out to be Milo," says Palladino, who sees Ventimiglia more fre-

quently on the red carpet as of late thanks to her new Amazon series, "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel." "He's always been such a stand-up guy. He's so kind. He's so thoughtful of everybody and so gracious to his co-actors and his crew. He takes his work extremely seriously without taking himself extremely seriously."

Mandy Moore, who plays Jack's wife, Rebecca, on "This Is Us," says Ventimiglia is Peak Dad in the little moments. She offers a time, before production on the first season had begun, when the two were set to make a press appearance and a strap on her shoe broke. "He pulled out a pocket knife and, like, MacGyver-ed the thing and was able to tie the piece back on my foot and made the shoe work," she says by phone. "He's that guy."

Ventimiglia's road to becoming America's TV dad has been a winding one, starting at age 8 — the age he knew he wanted to be an actor. Bit parts on TV shows such as "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air" eventually led to bigger roles, but in between there were moments in which he grew disenchanted with Hollywood. Ventimiglia had just come off the sci-fi thriller "The Whispers," which was canceled after one season in summer 2015, and was reassessing what he wanted "out of going into my 40s, as an actor, as a man. I pulled my foot off the gas a little bit and backed off and re-engaged with life."

By October, the script for "This Is Us" turned things around.

"When Milo first came in to meet with us, I knew instantly that that was the guy," show creator Dan Fogelman says by phone.

As "This Is Us" moves past one of its key plot points, Ventimiglia, who also splits his time producing projects with his longtime producing partner Russ Cundieff for their DiVide Pictures company, is eager to move on to other aspects of Jack.

"I feel like I've only been with this man a short period of time," he says. "We've seen maybe 32 hours' worth of Jack's life. I still feel like there's a lot we don't know about him — getting into his thoughts, into his heart, into his daily struggles as a human being. Then again, will we ever really know what the inside of Jack is? Because he mostly only reflects the positive."

Producers say they created 'character' of President Trump

Donald Trump wouldn't be in the White House without "The Apprentice," the creators of the former hit reality show claim.

Bill Pruitt, in the Netflix documentary "The Confidence Man," says the show turned the Trump Tower boardroom into how it looks on TV, based on the "Network" office. "If you walked around Trump's actual office in Trump Tower you'd see the wood's chipped, and what's that about?" Pruitt said.

"It wasn't the empire we were going to have to sell to people. We needed to gussy it up a bit. And we did."

Director Fisher Stevens said that the goal of "The Confidence Man," the final episode of the "Dirty Money" docu-series, was to show Trump's business failures, specifically in the early 1990s. "We wanted to show people that Donald Trump is not a good businessman when it comes to building a company and managing a company," he told People. "And I wanted to say how scary it is that he is running the country because he doesn't do due diligence on any of his deals."

Other news

■ More than 20,000 donations have added up to \$20 million for the Time's Up legal fund. The initiative was founded by more than 300 Hollywood women to combat sexual harassment and administrator Tina Chen said they've already gotten requests from 1,000 people.

■ There has been spreading money and goodwill throughout Miami this week, beginning with a surprise visit to Miami Senior High School on Monday to shoot parts of his new music video "God's Plan." He donated \$25,000 and promised students they'll get uniforms designed by his clothing label. Then he surprised University of Miami student Destiny James with a \$50,000 scholarship. And then, The Miami Herald reports Drake paid the grocery bills of every shopper inside a supermarket. He also gave \$50,000 to a non-profit for a homeless shelter where he also dropped \$150 Thru gift cards for all 130 women residents.

■ Delete your account. That's what Jim Carrey says Facebook users should do, as the actor looks to pull the mask off fake news. The said on Twitter on Tuesday that he's dumping his Facebook stock and deleting his page because the social site is profiting from Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election via spreading false news with Russian origins, and says the company is still not doing enough to stop it.

■ One of the "Kill Bill" producers Uma Thurman accused of covering up on-set car accident expressed heavy remorse — but denied any wrongdoing. Lawrence Bender said he had "deep regret" over the resulting pain Thurman suffered, but claimed he was in no way tempted to cover up the accident.

■ Mistic Jones, a character actor who played Rodney "Dot Rod" Dumbos on "Justified" and construction worker Pete on the sitcom "Home Improvement," has died. He was 76. Jones died early Wednesday morning of the effects of a long illness, said his publicist.

■ A founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation and a former lyricist for the Grateful Dead John Perry Barlow has died. EFF said in statement that Barlow died Wednesday morning in his sleep at age 70.

From wire reports

Growing up, my father represented this person of strength, of character. I saw not only the way he would talk to other people and his family but also how people would talk about him. People love my father — people love my mother. For me, it's always been, 'I want to live up to that.'

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Max D. Lederer Jr., Publisher
Lt. Col. Michael C. Bailey, Europe commander
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EDITORIAL

Terry Leonard, Editor
leonard.terry@stripes.com
Robert H. Reid, Senior Managing Editor
reid.robert@stripes.com
Tina Croley, Managing Editor for Content
croley.tina@stripes.com
Sean Moores, Managing Editor for Presentation
moores.sean@stripes.com
Joe Gromelski, Managing Editor for Digital
gromelski.joe@stripes.com

BUREAU STAFF

Europe/Mideast

Erk Slavin, Europe & Mideast
slavin.erk@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9350, DSN (314)583.9350

Pacific

Aaron Kidd, Pacific Bureau Chief
kidd.aaron@stripes.com
+81.422.552.2511 ext. 88380, DSN (315)227.7380

Washington

Joseph Caccioli, Washington Bureau Chief
caccioli.joseph@stripes.com
+1(202)761.0908, DSN (312)763.0908
Brian Bowers, Assistant Managing Editor, News
bowers.brian@stripes.com

CIRCULATION

Mideast
Robert Reismann, reismann.robert@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9150, DSN (314)583.9150

Europe

Van Rowell, rowell.van@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9111, DSN (314)583.9111

Pacific

Mari Mori, customerhelp@stripes.com
+81.3 6385.3171, DSN (315)229.3171
or by phone at 202.761.0900

CONTACT US

Washington

tel. (+1202) 761.0900, DSN (312)763.0900;
529 14th Street NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC
20045-1301

Reader letters

letters@stripes.com

Additional contacts

stripes.com/contacts

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OPINION

Follow-up on GIs' efforts in Syria with diplomacy

By DAVID IGNATIUS

Washington Post Writers Group

MANBIJ, Syria
Wednesday was a strange and scary day in Syria, even by Middle East standards. In the early afternoon, American military commanders, nearly victorious against Islamic State, were standing at a hilltop observation post here complaining about harassing fire from their Syrian Kurdish partners — from a rebel force that is backed by Turkey, our NATO ally.

And then a few hours later, about 100 miles to the southeast, ground troops supporting the Syrian regime of Bashar Assad struck a headquarters of Syrian Kurdish fighters and their partners from U.S. Special Operations Forces, 5 miles east of the Euphrates and possibly near Syrian oil fields. The American-led coalition hit back hard with airstrikes.

The U.S. military couldn't provide any details, but Russian forces have been backing the Syrian regime in the Deir al-Zour area. The firefighters continued well into the night and could mark a significant escalation of the war here.

Wednesday's lesson, on both fronts, is that this battlespace is way too crowded, and slipping dangerously close to a much wider conflict.

America and Turkey have been moving in slow motion toward their collision since the U.S. decided to destroy ISIS 3½ years ago. The only Syrian partners able to do the job were the Kurds, who dubbed themselves the Syrian Democratic Forces. Turkey was furious, claiming that the Kurdish group was "terrorist." But Ankara could never offer a credible alternative to conquer ISIS, so the U.S. pushed on.

When the Russians entered the fray in 2015, the U.S. tried to establish clear de-

Nothing in the Middle East is ever precisely what it appears. Each victory opens the door to a new problem, but no obstacle is quite as insurmountable as the bellicose rhetoric suggests.

conflict lines. But that has proved a delicate and uncertain business. Those Russia contacts are more essential now than ever. How can the U.S. untangle this mess so it can finish the job against ISIS? America needs "dialogue" and "de-escalation" quickly with Turkey, said Lt. Gen. Paul Funk, the commander of U.S. forces in Syria and Iraq. The campaign against ISIS is "slowing down," he warned, and the lull could "allow these people to escape" into Turkey and then to Europe.

Funk spoke to reporters here at an outpost manned by the SDF, a mile and a half west, you can see the berm that marks the forward position of the Turkish-backed rebels. About 40 miles farther west is the Kurdish zone called Afrin, which Turkish warplanes and artillery have been pounding since last month.

U.S. special operation forces have done wonders here, working with the SDF, shattering ISIS control of eastern Syria. But we're nearing the end of what military power can do. The next step requires diplomacy. It's encouraging that national security adviser H.R. McMaster is heading to Ankara this week. He will be wise to treat the crisis with Turkey as an opportunity — and start the quiet discussions that could lead to an eventual reconciliation of Turkish and American interests.

Manbij illustrates how the battle against

ISIS was turned by the U.S. and its SDF partners — and what post-ISIS recovery looks like.

The sidewalks of Jalla Street in the center of town were so crowded with shoppers Wednesday that it was easier to walk in the road. In a little stall selling men's cologne, Fawaz al-Khaman remembers that the favorite scent of ISIS fighters was a musky fragrance called "Sultan." Inside the covered market, where ISIS once built car bombs, the shops are packed. Women are buying colorful dresses, sparkling with sequins, and ripped jeans.

Perhaps the brightest spot in this liberated town is a girls' school, where students have returned after years in hiding from ISIS. Interrupted in the middle of French class, high school seniors talk animatedly about their plans. They're wearing make-up and vibrant clothes; a girl named Aisha is wearing a pink hijab.

Nothing in the Middle East is ever precisely what it appears. Each victory opens the door to a new problem, but no obstacle is quite as insurmountable as the bellicose rhetoric suggests.

On Wednesday, as Turkish-backed forces were firing at an SDF checkpoint, scores of trucks were queued up to cross from Manbij into the Turkish-controlled zone. The Syrian regime allowed Kurdish protesters to traverse regime territory to reach Afrin; later in the day, pro-regime forces were attacking the Kurds elsewhere. Meanwhile, as Turkish politicians were snarling at America, the Turkish and U.S. militaries continued their regular liaison.

Syrian Kurdish forces have been a brave partner for America, but also an inconvenience. Abandoning them would be a bad mistake, but it would also be wrong to let this hydra-headed conflict keep festering. The U.S. military did its job in Syria. Now it's time for hard-nosed diplomacy.

Trump loves a parade. But does the US need one?

By ANN McFEETERS

Tribune News Service

WASHINGTON
What this country needs is a massive, costly, super extravagant military parade down Pennsylvania Avenue with tanks, fighter flyers, bands, horses and hundreds of uniformed high-stepping troops all saluting their commander in chief, Donald Trump.

It would cost at least \$22 million, divert training and be highly unpopular in the military, which considers such large displays a waste of time, but it's what Trump wants. What Trump wants, Trump gets.

Ever since Trump was feted at the annual Bastille Day military parade in Paris, he's coveted one like it. Actually, bigger and better. "We're going to have to try to top it," Trump assured French President Emmanuel Macron.

Trump was sent to military boarding school but never served in the military, getting an exemption for bone spurs. But he claims great affection for the military and has expanded combat troops in Afghanistan, threatened North Korea and vowed to spend a whopping \$716 billion on the military. No other country in history has ever spent that much on its military. The White House says Trump is "incredibly supportive" of the nation's servicemen.

Trump also has resolved to beef up the nation's nuclear arsenal after decades of arms agreements to reduce nukes worldwide. He famously tweeted about North Korea dictator Kim Jong Un, "Will someone from his depleted and food starved re-

gime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger and more powerful one than his and my Button works!"

The new Trump nuclear plan revolves around new tactics and forecasts a new nuclear era in which low-yield nuclear weapons are designed to parry Russian encroachment outside its boundaries and which would be relatively easy to use. And for the reason the he called Doomsday Clock has been reset closer to midnight.

But we digress. Back to the parade.

It sounds as if Trump envisions something monumental — flyers, tanks, weapons displays, well-rehearsed marching units. Martial enclums that would go on for two hours.

The irony is that Trump did not enjoy his own Inaugural Day parade. He complained there were not enough A-list celebrities. He appeared visibly angry and put out during the entire parade. He was upset that former President Barack Obama's inaugural parade, timing the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I.

It is troubling that when you think of gargantuan military parades, you think of North Korea under anybody named Jong, France under Napoleon, Germany under the Kaiser, Germany under Hitler, Russia under Stalin, Russia under Putin, and under Caesar. Let's just say the history of

dictatorships is replete with showy military parades.

The White House says Trump just wants to honor the military, not himself. The military would probably rather not have to get ready for a parade but would prefer better domestic support for families, better equipment (yes, soldiers still have to provide much of their own), time to train, better care for veterans, higher pay and, above all, serious help for those who have been in combat and return with PTSD.

The last military parade was in 1991 when former President George H.W. Bush was celebrating the end of the First Persian Gulf War. It cost \$12 million.

OTTPresident, Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said, "That's a fantastic amount of money to amuse the president." He suggested using the money to make sure soldiers are ready for battle and return safely.

Iraq and Afghanistan veterans' groups say their members, still grappling with the effects of the war, need mental shutdown, don't support a logistically draining parade without a clear goal. Tanks and equipment have to be pulled out of training and laboriously cleaned. Troops give up previous free time.

But it isn't whimsy. Trump's desire is treated as an order from the commander in chief. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said the Pentagon is preparing options. There could be a cheaper, less-time-consuming option. What is the chance Trump the Showman would choose that one?

We have the world's best military. Do we really need a parade to prove it?

Ann McFeeters is an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

Train safety delays are deadly The Post and Courier of Charleston, S.C.

The number of deadly train collisions keeps piling up years after Congress mandated that railroads install an automatic-braking technology to prevent such accidents. Congress must end the delays and demand that railroads implement positive train control systems nationwide without delay.

Before Sunday's crash in Cayce that killed two people, there was the Amtrak derailment in Washington state that left three dead in December. There also was the derailment in Philadelphia that resulted in eight deaths. One person died when a transit train crashed into a New Jersey terminal. Hundreds were injured in those and other accidents.

After each accident, there was talk about the need to implement the positive train control system Congress passed in 2008. While the railroads expressed regret over the accidents, they also argued that the high cost of the system and the complexity of installing it made implementation extremely difficult. Those explanations would carry more weight if at least some of the accidents had been prevented since the National Transportation Safety Board put the technology on its "most wanted" safety improvements list in 1990.

We get it. With estimates ranging from \$10 billion to \$22 billion, it will take a lot of industry and federal money to completely install and maintain the system on the toll mounts with each accident, that cost doesn't seem so extreme. Indeed, while railroads have spent billions installing the equipment on some of their tracks, they also have found money to spend on new trains and stations. There's more work to do, and railroads should go to safety measures rather than amenities.

In its simplest terms, positive train control is akin to a smart autopilot system that serves as a backup to the humans running the trains. It can override a train's controls if it is going too fast or goes through a signal. While the NTSB has been pushing for the technology for decades, it was a crash near Los Angeles that killed 25 people in 2008 that pushed Congress to mandate that the technology be in place by 2016. Still, the railroads complained that they would have to shut down on Jan. 1, 2016, if they didn't have an extension.

So Congress allowed the railroads to kick the can down the road to the end of 2018, when more than three-quarters of railroads are expected to have the technology installed, but left a loophole that could push implementation on some lines to the end of 2020. It's past time for Congress to insist that railroads finish the job.

Big stage to reflect on Nassar Chicago Tribune

The winter Olympics this year is set against the looming menace posed by one of the world's most dangerous regimes — North Korea. Whether Pyongyang and the U.S. continue to trade threats of nuclear destruction is a challenge for politicians, diplomats and scores of strategic analysts.

That's one shadow cast across this Olympiad. The other transcends international conflict and boundaries, and stretches far beyond the world of elite athletes. That is the still-festering scandal of Larry Nassar, the U.S. gymnastics team doctor who sexually abused scores of young female gymnasts over two decades. In the past few



TIM DOMINICK, THE (COLUMBIA, S.C.) STATE/AP

Authorities investigate a fatal Amtrak train crash in Cayce, S.C., on Sunday.

weeks, more than 250 girls and women, many of them former Olympians or hopefuls, told their harrowing stories of abuse and betrayal. Nassar was sentenced to up to 175 years in prison in October.

Earlier this week, just days before Friday's opening Olympics ceremony, a Michigan judge sentenced Nassar to another long stretch in prison — up to 125 years — on separate charges.

You won't hear much if any about these cases during the Winter Games. We understand. These are different games, different venues, a different time.

But we hope the millions of viewers, many of them youngsters (and their parents) who harbor their own Olympic dreams, heed the lessons of those gymnasts. The Nassar victims spoke about how they trusted Michigan State University to protect them. And its leaders failed. And how they trusted team coaches and trainers. Those authority figures, too, failed. And how they trusted their parents. And they, too, failed to suspect, to heed signs — failed to imagine that a trusted and famed doctor could be a monstrous person in disguise.

The scandal's tally: careers ruined, lives haunted — is immeasurable. Investigations continue, as do civil court cases. The legal fallout isn't over, not even close.

But what we hope ends, now and forever, is the culture of disbelief, fear and silence that muzzled victims and discounted their claims. That means even suspicions of misconduct should set off a chain of responses. No dawdling. No second-guessing. This culture of vigilance leaves a sense of urgency to stop abusers.

Remember that word, urgency. In the Nassar case, the FBI investigated for more than a year but "followed a plodding pace" moving back and forth among agents in three cities, The New York Times reported. Evidence of wrongdoing mounted but the inquiry moved with "little evident urgency." In the interim, at least 40 girls and women say that Nassar molested them.

Let these, the first Olympic Games in the #MeToo era, open a million conversations among children and parents and with other adults, be they troop leaders, coaches, counselors or clergy. Let these games deter predators who might believe they, too, can abuse young athletes — any young people — in the guise of treatment or leadership or authority because no one is watching.

Every parent, coach, trainer, is now on notice. If they hear something, if they suspect something, we hope they'll say something. And follow up — with urgency.

Youngsters around the world eagerly watch the Olympics. They dream of performing on those slopes, on that ice, in those stadiums before ecstatic crowds. This is a time to celebrate the exploits of these amazing athletes, who have earned

a turn in the spotlight. But also to remember that in the shadows, predators can lurk. Not just in the gym, but in every organization, club and after-school activity where children play and learn.

Stopping these predators is every individual's duty.

Crass misuse of King's sermon The New York Times

William Bernbach, a titan of Madison Avenue who died in 1982, said, "If your advertising goes unnoticed, everything else is academic." The spinnemeisters for Ram trucks must have taken Bernbach's admonition to heart. With a Super Bowl commercial that used as its soundtrack a sermon delivered by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. 50 years earlier to the day, they got the notice they wanted. Much of the reaction, though, amounted to a richly deserved thumbs-down.

The sermon was King's "Drum Major Instinct" speech, given in Atlanta in 1968 two months before his assassination. Everybody, he said, had this instinct — "a desire to be out front, a desire to lead the parade, a desire to be first." But it had to be harnessed, he said as he went on to equate greatness with service to others. Ostensibly, the Ram commercial was an appeal for people to serve. But who's kidding whom? The goal was to sell trucks, with King's voice as pitchman.

The sheer crassness led to instant condemnation on social media, including speculation about what might be next — maybe trotting out James Baldwin to hawk "The Firestone Next Time"? Critics were hardly mollified by word that Ram had the blessing of Intellectual Properties Management, the licensor of King's estate. The estate has not always been his staunchest guardian against posthumous commercialization.

It might serve history a tad more faithfully to note other appeals that King made in that Feb. 4, 1968, sermon. For one thing, he was appalled by the way many people went into hock to buy vehicles they couldn't possibly afford. "So often, haven't you seen people making \$5,000 a year and driving a car that cost 6,000? And they wonder why their ends never meet?"

While we're at it, he also didn't think highly of advertising gurus — "you know, those gentlemen of massive verbal persuasion." He continued, "I have a way of saying things to you that kind of gets you into buying. In order to be a man of distinction, you must drink this whiskey. In order to make your neighbors envious, you must drive this type of car. In order to be lovely to love, you must wear this kind of lipstick, or this kind of perfume. And you know, before you know it, you're just buying that stuff."

For that matter, King might well have been talking about a president a half-century in the future when he expounded on the need to rein in the drum major instinct for otherwise it becomes "very dangerous"

and "pernicious."

"Have you ever heard people that, you know — and I'm sure you've met them — that really become sickening because they just sit up all the time talking about themselves?" he said. "And they just boast and boast and boast. And that's the person who has not harnessed the drum major instinct."

Of that sermon's finale, King said he thought about his own death and funeral. It led to these ringing words: "If you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice. Say that I was a drum major for peace. I was a drum major for righteousness. And all of the other shal-low things will not matter."

He did not ask to be a luckster for a line of trucks.

Trump on wrong side on Gitmo The Orange County (Calif.) Register

President Donald Trump's decision to keep open the Guantanamo Bay detention facility might score him some political points with those under the wrong impression that the facility is actually valuable to American national security, but it is fundamentally wrong.

Framing this policy at the State of the Union address as delivering on a campaign promise to keep the facility open, Trump's move reverses a 2009 executive order signed by President Barack Obama to close Guantanamo, the Cuban outpost where nearly 800 men over the course of its operation have been detained, but which now holds just 41.

The decision, unfortunately, does nothing more than reaffirm American commitments to a facility that is not only fraught with a legacy of torture and human rights abuses, but which is also demonstrably ineffective for American national security purposes.

As the past nearly two decades have shown, the facility is poorly situated for getting much done according to Human Rights Watch, of the 780 men who have been held at the Guantanamo base, 731 were ultimately released without charges. Of the eight people convicted by military commissions, three saw their convictions overturned and the convictions of three others were at least partially invalidated.

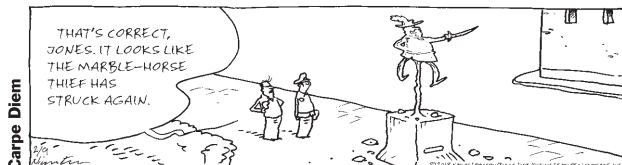
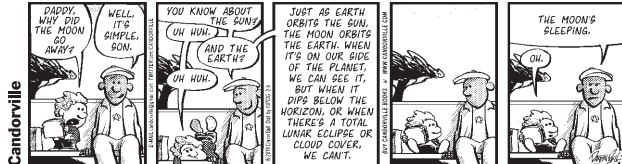
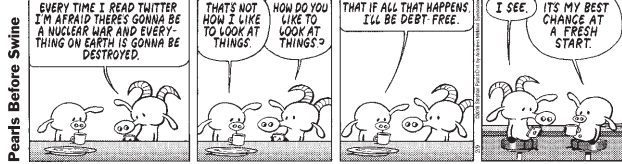
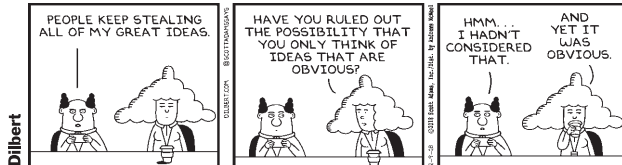
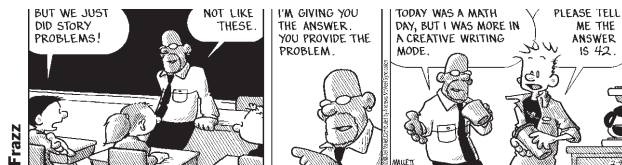
According to the organization Human Rights First, of the 41 detainees left at the facility, 23 are not currently charged with anything and are being held indefinitely, 10 are to be tried in military commissions, five have been cleared for release and only three have been convicted.

From a simple financial perspective, the facility makes little sense. More than \$6 billion has been spent to operate the Guantanamo lockup, while only a handful of detainees have ever been convicted by military commissions or federal courts. The cost of the human rights abuses — 443 as of 2014 — convicted on terrorism charges and held in American federal prisons.

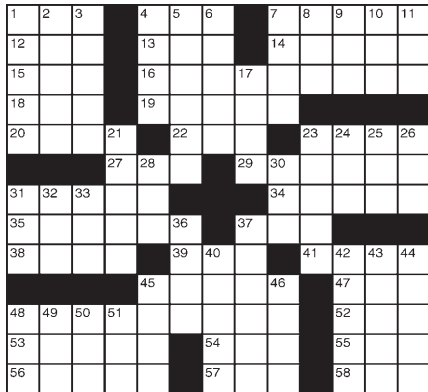
At a cost of more than \$440 million a year to operate, it is difficult to see how keeping the facility going makes very much sense when federal courts and prisons can do a better job at lower cost while also being more consistent with international norms and what should be American values with respect to due process and human rights generally.

In the latter part, Guantanamo has long been an embodiment of all that has been wrong with the way the United States has pursued the "war on terror." The use of torture, indefinite detention without a trial and the squandering of billions of American taxpayer dollars to run the facility have hurt the country's reputation in the world and its reputation to protect the American people.

Trump, in keeping the facility open, may think he is presenting a tough front on terrorism, but all that he is really doing is wasting considerable resources for a facility that hasn't actually been all that useful in combating or dealing with terrorism.



Eugene Snetter Crossword



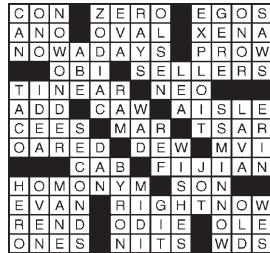
ACROSS

- 1 Guy's date
- 4 Mag. staff
- 7 Champagne glass
- 12 Actress Merkel
- 13 — Magnon
- 14 Less common
- 15 Sales rep.
- 16 You may order it by the glass
- 18 Dog doc
- 19 Baby hooter
- 20 Actor Baldwin
- 22 Away from NNW
- 23 Partially mine
- 27 "Psst!"
- 29 Shakespeare verse
- 31 Sends off order
- 34 Sandwich cookies
- 35 Suave
- 37 Your
- 38 Vanished
- 39 Round stat
- 41 Beige
- 45 Angry
- 47 Prune
- 48 Grammy-winning singer Amy
- 52 TV spots
- 53 Kicking partner
- 54 Earl Grey, e.g.
- 55 Once called
- 56 Hinder

DOWN

- 57 Shade tree
- 58 Understood
- 25 Old Oldsmobile
- 26 Map lines (Abbr.)
- 28 Ballpark fig.
- 30 Sound of delight
- 31 Flavor enhancer, for short
- 32 Latin 101 word
- 33 Charged bit
- 36 Protagonist
- 37 Fez feature
- 40 Way to go
- 42 Trolley sound
- 43 Wild West show
- 44 Surprise win
- 45 "Moonstruck" actress
- 46 Line of fashion?
- 48 Bankroll
- 49 — de-France
- 50 Petty peeve
- 51 Prior night

Answer to Previous Puzzle



2-9

CRYPTOQUIP

ULOJVLTY SFL'U LX QFJ

UWOJ QJWO WU WXLQFJH

BJHULX MX W BMX-QLBBNMXD

UBLHQ: W VLSNMXD WNNT.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN YOU APPLY A WATERPROOF COATING TO SOME SURFACES, YOU'VE GIVEN THEM THE SEALANT TREATMENT.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals W

Frazz



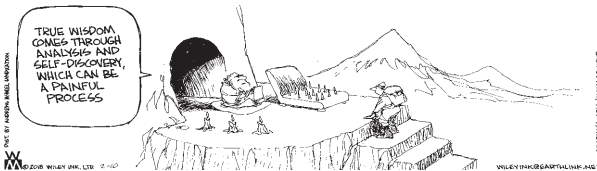
Dilbert



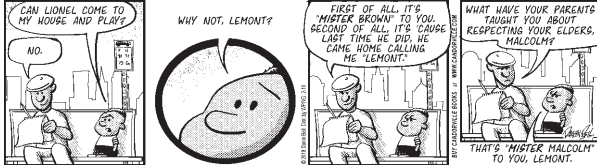
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



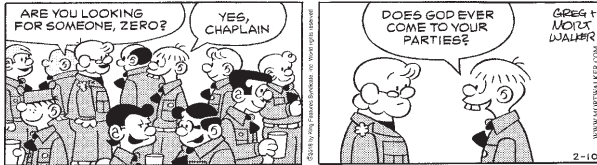
Candorville



Carpe Diem



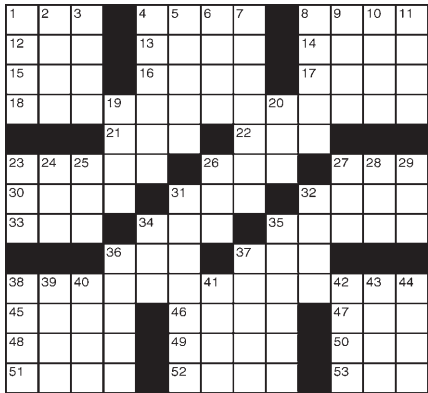
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



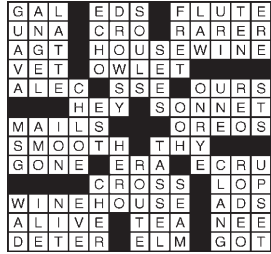
ACROSS

- 1 Back talk
- 4 Lettuce variety
- 8 Papa's mate
- 12 Low digit
- 13 Jazzy Fitzgerald
- 14 Send forth
- 15 Egypt's cont.
- 16 Laugh-a-minute
- 17 Novelist Jaffe
- 18 Verified again
- 21 Help
- 22 Spring month
- 23 Sand unit
- 26 Saloon
- 27 Knock
- 30 Sandbox toy
- 31 Stolen
- 32 Greek cheese
- 33 Cardinal cap
- 34 Preschooler
- 35 Delaware capital
- 36 Do wrong
- 37 — Lingus
- 38 Multilayered sandwiches
- 45 Nozzle site
- 46 Mediocre
- 47 Soda
- 48 Sheltered
- 49 Helen's home
- 50 "This — stickup!"
- 51 Ticked (off)

DOWN

- 1 Burden
- 2 Data
- 3 Lima's land
- 4 Songwriter Irving
- 5 Fibber's admission
- 6 United nations
- 7 Rug next to a tub
- 8 Lenient treatment
- 9 Out of control
- 10 Ore source
- 11 Slightly
- 19 Release money
- 20 Listener
- 23 Family docs
- 24 Squealer
- 25 Be sick
- 26 Automaton, for short
- 27 Speed (up)
- 28 Noshed
- 29 Standard
- 31 Truthfulness
- 32 Salad utensil
- 34 Up to, briefly
- 35 Fake drakes
- 36 Velocity
- 37 Fable writer
- 38 Just one of those things?
- 39 Actor's quest
- 40 "Got it"
- 41 Nickelodeon's "Explorer"
- 42 Grand tale
- 43 Activist Parks
- 44 Lovers' quarrel

Answer to Previous Puzzle



2-10

CRYPTOQUIP

BA LFG ABDLBKQCV CLLKPQGU

WGPPU WBDRGH C YGDKQH

DCPGGP, B'O LFBQRBQS BL'H

WPKZCZVU ZG OCYKQPU.

Yesterday's Cryptquip: SOMEBODY WHO'S ON THE SAME TEAM AS ANOTHER PERSON IN A PIN-TOPPLING SPORT: A BOWLING ALLY.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: W equals P



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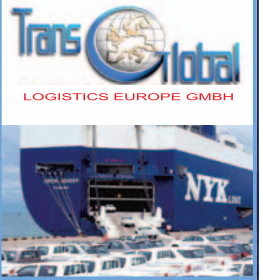
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- People saying Free Dog (different breeds) for adoption.

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SCOREBOARD

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Pro basketball

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	37	16	.700	0
Toronto	37	17	.688	1
Philadelphia	26	25	.510	11
New York	23	32	.418	16
Brooklyn	17	37	.309	22

Central Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Washington	31	23	.574	2
Charlotte	26	28	.527	7
Orlando	20	34	.370	13
Atlanta	17	37	.321	17

Southwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	37	22	.625	0
Milwaukee	30	28	.566	1
Indiana	28	30	.483	2
Pittsburgh	27	29	.509	4
Chicago	25	33	.430	13

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	40	13	.756	0
San Antonio	35	21	.625	6
New Orleans	29	27	.519	12
Memphis	18	36	.333	23

Northwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	31	24	.564	2
Oklahoma City	29	26	.520	3
Portland	29	25	.537	3
Utah	28	28	.481	6

Pacific Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Golden State	41	13	.759	0
Los Angeles	37	17	.685	4
L.A. Lakers	22	31	.415	18
Sacramento	18	35	.340	23
Portland	18	38	.321	25

Wednesday's games	Time	TV
Detroit 115, Brooklyn 101	7:00 PM	ESPN
Utah 92, Miami 101	7:00 PM	ESPN
Indiana 92, New Orleans 93	7:00 PM	ESPN
Orlando 82, Memphis 81	7:00 PM	ESPN

Thursday's games	Time	TV
Atlanta 94, Toronto 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
San Antonio 94, Washington 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
Charlotte 94, Portland 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
Golden State 94, Oklahoma City 90	7:00 PM	ESPN

Friday's games	Time	TV
L.A. Clippers 94, Detroit 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
New Orleans 94, Philadelphia 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
Golden State 94, Indiana 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
Boston 94, Denver 90	7:00 PM	ESPN

Saturday's games	Time	TV
New Orleans 94, Brooklyn 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
Golden State 94, Milwaukee 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
Charlotte 94, Dallas 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
San Antonio 94, Golden State 90	7:00 PM	ESPN

Sunday's games	Time	TV
Toronto 94, Charlotte 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
Cleveland 94, Boston 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
Detroit 94, Indiana 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
Dallas 94, Houston 90	7:00 PM	ESPN

Monday's games	Time	TV
Golden State 94, Sacramento 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
San Antonio 94, Dallas 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
Portland 94, Sacramento 90	7:00 PM	ESPN

Tuesday's games	Time	TV
Golden State 94, Portland 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
San Antonio 94, Dallas 90	7:00 PM	ESPN
Portland 94, Sacramento 90	7:00 PM	ESPN

Boxing

Feb. 10

Fight schedule	Time	TV
At Copter Box Arena, London, London, 12, to Omar Narvaez, 12, to Tete's	7:00 PM	ESPN
At Hartman Arena, Park City, Kansas, 12, to Willie Williams, 12, to the vacant WBO International super bantamweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

Feb. 16	Time	TV
At Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Reno, Nev., Raymond Beltran vs. Pous Moses, 12, to the vacant WBO World super flyweight title; Kevanla Kavalasala vs. David Avanesyan, 10, welterweights.	7:00 PM	ESPN

Feb. 17	Time	TV
At Manchester, England, George Groves vs. Chris Eubank Jr., 12, to Groves vs. Ricky Hatton, 12, to the vacant WBO super middleweight title; World Boxing Council, 12, to the vacant WBO super flyweight title; Arfan Iqbal vs. Simon Valentin, 10, welterweights.	7:00 PM	ESPN

Feb. 18	Time	TV
At El Paso, Texas, Devon Alexander vs. Victor Ortiz, 12, welterweights; Caleb Pennington vs. David Garcia, 12, IBF super middleweight eliminator.	7:00 PM	ESPN

Feb. 19	Time	TV
At Mandalay Bay Events Center, Las Vegas, Danny Garcia vs. Brandon Rios, 12, welterweights; David Benavidez vs. Ronald Garcia, 12, to Benavidez's WBC	7:00 PM	ESPN

Feb. 20	Time	TV
At Fantasy Sports Resort Casino, Ingle, Calif., Jose Martinez vs. Victor Torres, 12, to Diaz's NABO featherweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

Feb. 24	Time	TV
At the Forum, Las Vegas, Calif., Wisakul Wangek vs. Juan Francisco Estrada, 12, to Wangek's WBC World super flyweight title; Carlos Guadalupe vs. Williams Arango, 10, junior bantamweights; Wangek vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to the vacant WBA World flyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

Feb. 25	Time	TV
At Korakuen Hall, Tokyo, Danny Roman vs. Ryu Matsumoto, 12, to Roman's	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 1	Time	TV
At Tokyo, Japan, Shinsuke Yamanaka, 12, to Nery's WBC World bantamweight title; Carlos Guadalupe vs. Williams Arango, 10, junior bantamweights; Wangek vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to the vacant WBA World flyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 3	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 5	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 7	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 9	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 11	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 13	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 15	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 17	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 19	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 21	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 23	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 25	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 27	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 29	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

March 31	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 2	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 4	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 6	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 8	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 10	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 12	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 14	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 16	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 18	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 20	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 22	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 24	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 26	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 28	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

April 30	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

May 2	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

May 4	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey Kovalev vs. Igor Mikhalin, 12, to Kovalev's WBO-IBO light heavyweight title; Dmitry Gulyaev vs. Artem Dalakian, 12, to Bivol's WBA World light heavyweight title.	7:00 PM	ESPN

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May 18	Time	TV
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May 22	Time	TV
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May 24	Time	TV
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Garza, 12, New York's WBC World heavyweight title; Sergey		

NHL

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Tampa Bay	53	36	14	3	75	189	140
Boston	52	33	11	8	74	173	124
Toronto	56	32	19	5	69	182	156
Florida	51	23	22	6	52	146	164
Detroit	52	21	23	8	50	136	154
Montreal	53	22	25	6	50	139	164
Ottawa	52	18	25	9	45	137	179
Buffalo	53	14	29	10	38	120	175

Metropolitan Division

Washington	53	31	17	5	67	165	154
Pittsburgh	55	30	22	3	63	169	166
New Jersey	52	27	17	8	62	157	156
Philadelphia	53	25	19	9	58	152	155
Columbus	53	27	22	4	58	139	150
N.Y. Islanders	54	26	22	6	58	161	197
Carolina	54	24	21	9	57	144	164
N.Y. Rangers	54	25	24	5	55	157	168

Western Conference

Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Winnipeg	54	32	13	9	73	176	143
Nashville	52	32	12	8	72	163	134
St. Louis	55	32	20	3	67	155	140
Dallas	54	31	19	4	66	167	140
Minnesota	53	29	19	5	63	159	152
Colorado	52	29	19	4	62	167	150
Chicago	53	24	21	8	56	155	148

Pacific Division

Vegas	53	35	14	4	74	181	145
San Jose	53	28	19	5	64	153	145
Los Angeles	53	29	19	5	63	153	129
Calgary	53	27	18	8	62	150	151
Anaheim	55	26	19	10	62	155	150
Edmonton	52	23	25	4	50	146	168
Vancouver	53	21	26	6	48	138	171
Arizona	53	12	32	9	33	122	186

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Wednesday's games

Toronto 3, Nashville 2, SO
Boston 5, N.Y. Rangers 1
Los Angeles 5, Edmonton 2

Thursday's games

N.Y. Islanders at Buffalo
Calgary at New Jersey
Montreal at Philadelphia
Nashville at Ottawa
Vancouver at Tampa Bay
Arizona at Minnesota
Colorado at St. Louis
Dallas at Chicago
Vegas at San Jose

Friday's games

Columbus at Washington
Buffalo at N.Y. Islanders
Calgary at N.Y. Rangers
Los Angeles at Florida
Vancouver at Carolina
St. Louis at Winnipeg
Pittsburgh at Dallas
Edmonton at Anaheim

Saturday's games

Buffalo at Boston
New Jersey at Columbus
Nashville at Montreal
Los Angeles at Tampa Bay
Ottawa at Toronto
Colorado at Carolina
Philadelphia at Arizona
Chicago at Minnesota
Edmonton at San Jose

Sunday's games

Pittsburgh at St. Louis
N.Y. Rangers at Winnipeg
Detroit at Washington
Vancouver at Dallas
Calgary at N.Y. Islanders
Boston at New Jersey
Buffalo at Philadelphia
Philadelphia at Vegas
San Jose at Anaheim

Leaders

Goal scoring

Name	Team	GP	G
Alex Ovechkin	Washington	53	32
Evgeni Malkin	Pittsburgh	51	30
Nathan Kittling	Vancouver	53	28
Sean Couturier	Philadelphia	53	27
Nikita Kucherov	Tampa Bay	53	27
Anders Lee	N.Y. Islanders	54	27
John Tavares	N.Y. Islanders	54	27
Tyler Segall	Dallas	54	26
Brook Boeser	Vancouver	50	25
Auston Matthews	Toronto	49	25
Sean Monahan	Calgary	49	25
Patrice Bergeron	Boston	47	24
Phil Kessel	Toronto	55	24
Patrick Laune	Winnipeg	54	24
Mark Messier	Colorado	49	24
James Neal	Vegas	53	23
Eric Staal	Minnesota	53	23
Connor McDavid	Edmonton	52	22
Richard Rakell	Anaheim	50	22
Jason Zucker	Minnesota	53	22

Plus/Minus

Name	Team	GP	+/-
Zdeno Chara	Boston	53	29
William Karlsson	Vegas	53	29
Nathan Smith	Calgary	53	26
Brad Marchand	Boston	39	26
Dustin Brown	Los Angeles	53	25
Victor Hedman	Tampa Bay	48	24
Yanni Brody	Toronto	48	24
Jonathan Marchessault	Vegas	50	23
Nathan MacKinnon	Colorado	49	23
Jaden Schwartz	St. Louis	53	23
Chad Hyman	Toronto	56	22
Roshan Marchant	Anaheim	53	22
Radek Faksa	Dallas	53	21
Nathaniel MacKinnon	Colorado	49	21
Esa Lindell	Dallas	54	20
Antton Stralman	Tampa Bay	51	20
Justin Brodie	Minnesota	53	19
Ante Kopitar	Los Angeles	53	19
Matt Grezelyk	Boston	34	18



RON JENKINS/AP

Dallas Stars head coach Ken Hitchcock looks on as the Stars play the New York Rangers on Feb. 5 in Dallas. The Stars are now in their 25th year in North Texas, and Hitchcock's first back behind their bench since he was fired 50 games into the 2001-02 season.

Taking on a different role

Hitchcock's second stint in Dallas doesn't resemble first

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS
Associated Press

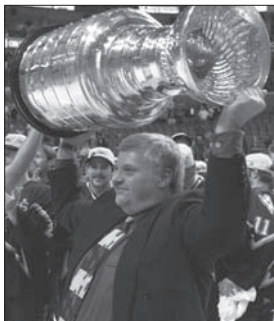
The first time Ken Hitchcock became the Dallas Stars coach more than two decades ago, his role and the setting were much different in a southern market that was still pretty fresh to hockey and the NHL.

"It was half coaching and half community involvement, trying to build the brand," said Hitchcock, who got his first NHL head coaching job in January 1996 when the Stars were in only their third season in Big D. "It was a really exciting, different observation for all of us. ... At least once or twice a week, we were meeting with groups to just explain what hockey was about."

Hitchcock found himself talking to people who really had no idea what was happening on the ice or why there were fights. He even had to answer at least one media question about why goalies had bigger pads than hockey players.

But fans in North Texas certainly understand and embrace champions. The NFL's Dallas Cowboys were already five-time Super Bowl champions before the Stars reached the NHL's pinnacle in winning the Stanley Cup in 1999 and then making it back to the Final the next year.

The Stars are now in their 25th year in North Texas, and this is Hitchcock's first season back behind their bench. After missing the playoffs seven of the last nine years, Dallas is 31-19-4 with 66 points this



RYAN REMIREZ, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Ken Hitchcock guided the Stars to their only Stanley Cup in the 1998-99 season.

season. The Stars are 7-2-1 their last 10 games and in solid position in the playoff chase with 28 games left in the regular season.

"The game's changed so much, that it's hard to say Dallas is the reason we can win again with him, or what it may be," said five-time All-Star center Tyler Seguin, the team's top goal scorer. "I think it's more just his résumé of being a successful coach and having successful teams, and I know what it was like to

play St. Louis all the time when he was behind that bench, and we want to be the same kind of team in a way."

Hitchcock was still the coach of the Blues two years ago when they knocked Dallas out of the second round of the playoffs.

After being fired by the Stars 50 games into the 2001-02 season, Hitchcock also coached in Philadelphia and Columbus. Anaheim's Randy Carlyle and Montreal's Claude Julien are also current NHL head coaches back in their original jobs, though both had shorter gaps before returning to their teams last season.

Anaheim was still the Mighty Ducks when Carlyle first arrived for the 2005-06 season, and won the Stanley Cup a year later. He was fired early in the 2011-12 season, then was a midseason replacement in Toronto, where he stayed 2½ more seasons after that. The Ducks made it to the Western Conference finals in his return last year.

Julien was first in Montreal from 2002-06, then spent a season with the New Jersey Devils. He won the Stanley Cup in 2011 and made another final appearance two years later during his 10 seasons with the Boston Bruins.

When Hitchcock was first with the Stars, their practice facility was in the middle of the Valley Ranch neighborhood just down the road from the Cowboys' headquarters.

The hockey operations are now based in the still-growing suburb of Frisco, about a half-hour drive north of the downtown Dallas arena where they play games. And the Cowboys are again a nearby neighbor after building a new practice facility and complex in the same area.

NBA/OLYMPICS

Cavs trade Thomas in roster overhaul

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — With the stunning force of a LeBron James dunk, the Cavaliers shattered their roster.

Cleveland completely changed its look — and perhaps its chances of winning an NBA title this season — on Thursday with a stunning sequence of trades before the deadline, a person with direct knowledge of the deals told The Associated Press.

The Cavs began their overhaul by sending disappointing guard Isaiah Thomas to the Los Angeles Lakers, said the person who spoke on condition of anonymity because the teams are awaiting league approval to finalize all the deals. Thomas played in just 15 games as he returned from a hip injury and struggled to fit in, so the Cavs dealt him along with forward Channing Frye and one of their two first-round picks to the Lakers for point guard Jordan Clarkson and forward Larry Nance Jr.

As the Thomas swap was being digested around the league, the Cavs completed a three-team deal with Utah and Sacramento. The Cavs sent guard Derrick Rose and forward Jae Crowder to the Jazz for forward Rodney Hood. They'll receive guard George Hill from the Kings in exchange for guard Iman Shumpert.

And if all that wasn't enough, the Cavs then dealt 36-year-old Dwyane Wade to Miami for a heavily protected second-round pick. It's a homecoming for Wade, who played 13 seasons in Miami, winning three NBA titles — two of them with James.

James went on Instagram to endorse the move for one of his best friends, posting "truly happy for my brother @dwyanewade!! It's how it's suppose to be. Love you my guy!! #WadeCountyBack."

The massive makeover is intended to help the Cavs make another title run in 2018 with James, who can opt out of his contract this summer and become a free agent. The 33-year-old James has said he would like to finish his career in Cleveland and general manager Koby Altman, who has only been in charge of the roster since July, gave James a team he can lead back to the Finals.

The Cavs also protected themselves if they lose James by hanging onto the first-round pick they acquired last summer in the blockbuster trade that sent All-Star Kyrie Irving to Boston for Thomas, Crowder and center Ante Zizic.

ESPN was first to report the dizzying run of deals.

"I'm tired of being traded," he said. "That's not a good thing. But



TONY DEJAK/AP

The Cleveland Cavaliers dealt guard Isaiah Thomas to the Los Angeles Lakers on Thursday.

I just want to be where I'm wanted. I like it here. It hasn't been as planned, but I definitely want to be here."

The Cavaliers, though, had other plans and needed to do something rash while in a prolonged slump and with All-Star forward Kevin Love out with a broken left hand.

Thomas, who turned 29 on Wednesday, wasn't working out. He missed Cleveland's first 36 games while coming back from a torn right labrum that knocked him out of last year's playoffs. The Cavs tried to incorporate him into their offense, but it was forced and bogging them down.

Cleveland is just 7-13 since Christmas Day, and the club's slide has coincided with Thomas' comeback. He played better on Wednesday night, scoring 13 points with seven assists in 31 minutes. But he's a defensive liability on a defensively challenged team and the Cavs felt it was best to move him.

While Thomas struggled on the floor, he didn't help himself with some peculiar off-the-court comments.

Following Tuesday's embarrassing loss to the 17-win Orlando Magic — the Cavs blew a 21-point lead and scored nine points in the fourth quarter — Thomas questioned whether the team makes enough in-game adjustments.

Those remarks were dismissed by coach Tyrone Lue, who said, "That's not true."

Lue tweaked his rotations against the Timberwolves, giving more minutes to rookie Cedric Osman, who provided an infusion of needed energy. Late in the game, Thomas was pulled off the floor by Lue and the guard stood near Cleveland's bench and shook his head in disappointment.

Hours later, he was gone along with five other players who weren't enough to keep the Cavs among the league's elite teams.

Hood and Nance will help Cleveland defensively while Hill is a shot maker who will benefit by playing alongside James.



DITA ALANKARA/AP

American slider Katie Uhlaender finished fourth in the women's skeleton competition at the Sochi Olympics. One of the people who beat her was a Russian slider implicated in that nation's government-sponsored doping scandal. All Uhlaender can do now is wait and see if she's an Olympic medalist or not.

American skeleton sliders want uniform drug testing

By TIM REYNOLDS

Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — There was an offseason when U.S. skeleton athlete Katie Uhlaender got a knock on her door from drug testers 19 times in the span of a few weeks. Sometimes they wanted blood. Sometimes they wanted urine. Often, they wanted both.

The process is annoying. It's also effective, so Uhlaender and her teammates wonder why it's not the global standard.

Uhlaender and other members of the U.S. skeleton team suggested Thursday that the rest of the world should follow the testing model employed by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, especially with the ongoing fallout from the Russian doping scandal that saw widespread accusations of cheating and now a belief that many flat-out beat a broken system.

"I'd love if the global model adopted ours" three-time U.S. men's skeleton Olympian John Daly said. "We get tested pretty strictly, as does Canada. Everyone else? You talk to some of the other athletes, they don't even know how to fill out the paperwork. The testing isn't happening. We don't care if our testing is strict. That's fine with me. We just want the rest of the world to be like ours."

It's not the first time American athletes have offered this opinion. Olympic swimming great Michael Phelps took his pleas for change to Congress last year, saying that he does not believe "that I've stood up at international

US bobsledder Olsen resumes workouts after appendectomy

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — U.S. bobsledder Justin Olsen has resumed light workouts three days after an emergency appendectomy and is expected to compete in the Pyeongchang Olympics.

Olsen was hospitalized Monday, underwent laparoscopic surgery and was discharged Wednesday. Olsen has been sleeping well, and U.S. team doctors remain confident he will be ready for the start of competition.

Olsen is scheduled to drive in the two- and four-man events.

"I plan to resume training here shortly," Olsen said Thursday. He has some time to continue his recovery.

Even though the Olympics officially open Friday, bobsledding takes place late in the games. Of-

ficial on-ice training for two-man doesn't start until Feb. 15, with the competition on Feb. 18 and 19. The four-man competition is on Feb. 24 and 25, the final two days of the Olympics.

The U.S. has said it is keeping its options open, but for now the belief is that Olsen will race.

Olsen is an Olympic gold medalist, having been part of the four-man team that won in the sled piloted by the late Steven Holcomb at the 2010 Vancouver Games to snap a 62-year drought by the U.S. in bobsledding's signature race. He also was a push athlete at the 2014 Sochi Games, then became a pilot the following season, and is at the Olympics as a driver for the first time.

— Associated Press

competitions and the rest of the field has been clean."

Same goes these days for sliders, who saw many Russians sanctioned and banned by the International Olympic Committee — and many of those reinstated after appeals went to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

"I'm not in other nations' testing pools, so I can't speak exactly for how often they get tested," said Matt Antoine, the bronze medalist in men's skeleton at the Sochi Games. "But my perception, talk-

ing to them, is we get tested considerably more than they do."

Uhlaender finished fourth at the Sochi Olympics four years ago. When Russia's Elena Nikitina was found by the IOC to have been part of the doping program at those Olympics, Uhlaender was expected to move up to Nikitina's bronze-medal spot. But the CAS ruling essentially restored Nikitina's medal, Uhlaender still doesn't have one and now Nikitina is among those in Pyeongchang fighting for a chance to compete.

WINTER OLYMPICS

AMERICANS TO WATCH

Jamie Anderson

Snowboarding

Anderson, who will defend her slopestyle gold medal from Sochi, is third in the World Cup standings in that discipline, behind Reira Iwabuchi of Japan and New Zealand's Christy Prior. Anderson has a shelf full of X Games medals; she won her first, a bronze, in 2006 when she was just 15.

Gus Kenworthy

Freestyle skiing

Kenworthy was a silver medalist in slopestyle four years ago in Russia, but he made as many headlines for adopting some of Sochi's stray dogs. And though he worried that it would hurt his sponsorships, he came out, and that boosted his marketability even more. Now he will be one of two openly gay U.S. athletes competing in Pyeongchang.

Maddie Bowman

Freestyle halfpipe

Bowman returns to defend her 2014 gold medal, but she will face tough competition from Kexin Zhang of China and Cassie Sharpe of Canada, not to mention her U.S. teammates, Brita Sigourney, who leads the World Cup rankings; Devin Logan (fifth); and Annalisa Drew (seventh).

Alex Rigsby

Hockey

Rigsby will make her Olympic debut at goalie for the women's team, which is seeking its first Olympic gold medal since 1998. Rigsby has played in four world championships for the United States, winning four gold medals. She has played the past three seasons for the Minnesota Whitecaps professional team.



Rigsby

Katie Uhlaender

Skeleton

In her third Olympics in 2014, Uhlaender finished off the podium, 0.04 seconds behind Russia's Elena Nikitina. For a while, it looked as if she would move up to third and earn a bronze when Nikitina was stripped of her medal and banned from the Olympics in the wake of the scandal surrounding state-sponsored doping in Russia. But the Court of Arbitration for Sport overturned Nikitina's ban last week. Uhlaender is the top-ranked American woman (12th) in the World Cup standings.



Wise

David Wise

Freestyle skiing

Wise enters the Olympics on a roll, winning gold at the Winter X Games after performing four doubles in four different directions on his final run. Wise will defend the halfpipe gold medal he won four years ago in Sochi.



Taylor

Elena Meyers Taylor

Bobsled

After a bronze at the Vancouver Games in 2010 and a silver four years later in Sochi, Taylor hopes the progression continues with a gold in Pyeongchang. She ranks second in the World Cup standings with 1,591 points, behind Canadian Kallie Humphries' 1,631.

Mikaela Shiffrin

Skiing

At 18, Shiffrin became the youngest skier to win gold in the slalom at the 2014 Games. At 22, she will try to become the first skier, male or female, to repeat as Olympic slalom champion. Shiffrin is the best skier in the world. She has nearly twice as many overall points in the World Cup standings as her next competitor. She ranks first in slalom, third in giant slalom and fifth in downhill. At the 2017 world championships, she became the first woman to win three consecutive slalom world titles in 78 years.

Nathan Chen

Figure skating

The 18-year-old Chen already is a two-time U.S. champion, and he won two gold medals in 2017 — in the ISU Grand Prix and the Four Continents Championship. Though young, Chen has a powerful repertoire that few can match: He performs five quads — jumps that include four revolutions — in his free skate and two in his short program. None of the three men on the U.S. skating team have Olympic experience. Vincent Zhou is even younger than Chen — 17 — and Adam Rippon is a rookie at age 28.



Taylor

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AP photos

Top: American snowboarder Jamie Anderson trains in Pyeongchang, South Korea, on Thursday. **Above:** American freestyle skier Gus Kenworthy celebrates at the end of his second run in the men's ski slopestyle final at the Rosa Khutor Extreme Park at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Krasnaya Polyana, Russia.

Ted Ligety

Skiing

Ligety, 33, had not made a World Cup podium for three years before winning a bronze at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, in late January.

That sends the two-time Olympic gold medalist (the combined in 2006 and the giant slalom in 2014) to Pyeongchang on a high note.

— The Washington Post

WINTER OLYMPICS



RICK BOWMER/AP

The United States' Erin Hamlin will carry the U.S. flag into Friday night's opening ceremony at the Pyeongchang Olympics. The four-time Olympic luger was chosen by fellow Team USA Olympians for the honor. Hamlin is retiring at the end of these Olympics, after nearly two decades of racing competitively.

Davis rips flagbearer coin toss

Speedskater criticizes process which selected luge vet Hamlin

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — It was a feel-good story for a few hours: Luge veteran Erin Hamlin gets the chance to enter her last Olympics carrying the U.S. flag into the opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Games, winning that distinction after a vote by some of her fellow athletes.

And then Shani Davis tweeted.

With that, the entire process was called into controversy. The tweet posted to Davis' account said the process by which Hamlin won was executed "dishonorably," and included a reference to Black History Month — raising the question of whether the speedskater was suggesting that race played a role in the decision.

Davis is black, Hamlin is white.

"We feel strongly toward Shani and they felt strongly for Erin," U.S. speedskater Joey Mantia said. "That's just that."

Hamlin and Davis were among eight nominees for the flagbearer role, and athletes from each of the eight winter sports federations — bobsled and skeleton, ski and snowboarding, figure skating, curling, biathlon, hockey, speedskating and luge — represented those nominees in balloting that took place Wednesday night.

Eventually, the final vote was deadlocked at 4-4. Hamlin won a coin toss, the predetermined method of picking a winner if all else failed in the athlete-led process. The U.S. Olympic Committee confirmed the tie, and that voters knew if the tie couldn't be broken by them the coin toss would have to occur.

USA Luge declined comment on the tweet. Calls placed to Davis' phone rang unanswered, and his agent Ian Baranski did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Hours before the tweet was posted, Hamlin was beaming about the opportunity. The four-time Olympian told the story about how her parents, Ron and Eileen Hamlin, always wrestle with the decision about whether to spend the money for high-priced tickets to the opening ceremony — and in the end, always go to see their daughter march into the stadium with her U.S. teammates.

"I think they're going to be really glad that they made that decision," Hamlin said. "They're really pumped. I'm sure my brothers will be. We've grown up watching the Olympics and we're always like,

'Who's going to be carrying the flag?' And to actually be that person is insane."

Hamlin's teammates were thrilled by the news, both because of what it will mean for her and what it means for the niche sport of luge.

"I was so happy for her," U.S. doubles Olympian Jayson Terdiman said. "It's one of the coolest things. I tell you what, I can't wait. I couldn't wait before, but now I can't wait even more. Not just does Erin get to hold that flag, but USA Luge gets to hold that flag. It's so cool. It's a great honor for our small sport."



Davis

Davis was certainly a worthy candidate. He's now a five-time Olympian, with two gold medals and two silver medals in his collection. It could not be determined if Davis posted the tweet himself, or if anyone else with access to his account may have.

Davis' mother, Cherie Davis, said she was unaware of the tweet until an AP reporter spoke to her by phone.

"I know something about a coin toss, he told me last night," she said Thursday. "I don't know anything else. Is that all?"

Hamlin is a four-time Olympian, a winner of a bronze medal at the 2014 Sochi Games, a two-time world champion and a winner of 23 World Cup medals. Despite that résumé, Hamlin — who is retiring after the Olympics — never thought she would be the pick.

In December, when asked in an interview with The Associated Press if she thought it would be possible, Hamlin giggled.

"To me, that always seems to be a really, really big-name person," Hamlin said at the time.

It's not the first time Davis has been part of an Olympic controversy.

In 2006, Davis — the first African-American to win an individual gold medal at a Winter Games — decided not to take part in the team pursuit at the Turin Games and raised the ire of teammate Chad Hedrick. Their animosity toward one another was obvious at a news conference, when Hedrick brought up the team pursuit and Davis stormed out of the room.

Tensions: Numbers define Games, not philosophies

FROM BACK PAGE

They will unfold — officially, at least — without the Russians who dominated on the ice and snow and in the backroom of the drug testing labs four years ago in Sochi. And they will take place amid rising world tensions and a last-minute rapprochement of sorts between the two Koreas that may be as much of a show as the games themselves.

Politics are very much in play, but in the end the Olympics are usually defined more by numbers than philosophies.

With that in mind, here are some numbers that might help make sense of it all:

3 — Mikaela Shiffrin's goal is to do what no skier has ever done — win five gold medals on the slopes. The young American star probably won't do that, but there's a good chance she can win three, something skiers have done only three times. Shiffrin is a prohibitive favorite to defend the slalom title she won in Sochi, a top contender in the giant slalom and the favorite in the combined.

2 — The number of North Korean athletes who qualified for the Olympics on merit. Up to 22 will actually compete in the games, cheered on by a highly choreographed group of singers and dancers, along with the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

13,500 — The number of eggs Norway's Olympic team will be sending back after a breakfast order went sunny side up. Norway thought it was ordering 1,500 eggs from a Korean distributor for the Games but a translation mistake caused 15,000 to be delivered instead.

50 — Miles from the mountains of Pyeongchang to the North Korean border.

100 — The perfect number Shaun White scored last month to give him a spot in the snowboard halfpipe. The U.S. star won the first two golds in the sport before flaming out in Sochi.

4 — The unofficial over-under for the number of halfpipe snowboarders carried off the slopes

on stretchers. White himself was sent to the hospital twice after crashes last year, and defending gold medalist Iouri Podladtchikov was knocked out in a scary crash last month at the Winter X Games.

149 — In Sochi the best teams were made up of NHL players, 149 of them in all. No current players will be in Pyeongchang, after the league decided its best interests were not served by shutting down in midseason for three weeks like it did the last five Winter Olympics.

\$900 million — The amount of ads NBC has sold for its broadcast of the games.

14 — The time difference in hours from New York, which is why some of the biggest prime-time events on NBC will actually take place in the morning in Korea.

86 — The number of workers ill with norovirus a day before opening ceremony. The figure is expected to rise, forcing organizers to bring in 900 military personnel to take the place of sick or exposed security workers.

4 — If it's a Winter Olympics there have to be new sports. There are four of them in this Olympics, including a mass start speedskating event featuring 24 skaters that has been compared to a NASCAR race on ice.

168 — Russia is officially banned from the Olympics because of a state-sponsored doping scheme the country carried out in Sochi. But 168 Russians will still compete under a neutral flag as "Olympic athletes from Russia" and 45 others could win last-minute appeals and make their way onto the snow and ice.

10.5 — The over-under for gold medals won by U.S. athletes.

32 — The temperature water freezes, and also the forecast for Friday night's opening ceremonies. Organizers are giving 35,000 fans heated seat cushions, hand warmers and other gear to ward off the cold in the outdoor stadium, where winds are expected to make it feel like it is in the 20's.



AARON FAVILA/AP

Canada's Kaitlyn Lawes releases the stone beside the Olympics logo during a mixed doubles curling match against Norway at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Gangneung, South Korea, on Thursday.

WINTER OLYMPICS



DARRO BANDI/AP

France's Martin Fourcade has been biathlon's most dominant competitor since the 2011-12 season when he won the first of six straight World Cup total score championships. He's considered a favorite to take home gold in South Korea.

Cross-country skiing at a glance

Competition dates: Women's 7.5km/7.5km Skiathlon, Feb. 10. Men's 15km/15km Skiathlon, Feb. 11. Men's Sprint Classic, Women's Sprint Classic, Feb. 13. Women's 10km Freestyle, Feb. 15. Men's 15km Freestyle, Feb. 16. Women's 4x5km Relay, Feb. 17. Men's 4x10km Relay, Feb. 18. Women's Team Sprint, Men's Team Sprint, Feb. 21. Women's 30km Mass Start Classic, Men's 50km Mass Start Classic, Feb. 24.

Norway's Marit Bjørgen is heading to the Pyeongchang Olympics looking for a three-peat of her three-peat. Bjørgen, the most successful women's cross-country skier in history, has won three gold medals in each of the past two Winter Games and will be looking to make it three in a row.

Bjørgen has won 10 medals overall, tied with Raisa Smetanina and Stefania Belmondo as the most decorated female Winter Olympian ever.

MEDAL FAVORITES: Dario Cologna from Switzerland is considered one of the favorites to bring home some hardware after winning gold medals in the 15-kilometer classic and the 30-kilometer skiathlon in Sochi four years ago. The 31-year-old Cologna, known as "Super Dario," passed Sweden's Marcus Hellner on the final climb and went on to win a tightly contested 30-kilometer skiathlon. Cologna remains at the top of his game, winning his fourth Tour de Ski Championship to start the new year. On the women's side, Bjørgen could be challenged for gold by teammates Heidi Weng and Ingvil Flugstad and Sweden's Charlotte Kalla in the 15-kilometer skiathlon.

AMERICAN HOPEFUL: The Americans don't have a great history with cross-country skiing — they have only won one Olympic medal in the sport's history — but Jessie Diggins might be the country's best hope. The fun-loving Diggins is the most decorated U.S. cross-country skier, male or female, in world championship history. She is third in the world in cross-country standings, according to the International Ski Federation.

OLYMPIAN EFFORT: Pita Taufatofua, the shirtless, oiled-up flag-bearing taekwondo competitor from Tonga who turned heads at the Summer Games in Rio two years ago is now trying his hand at being a cross-country skier. Although it's hard to imagine him shirtless and oiled up in sub-freezing temperatures at the Winter Games.

— Steve Reed, Associated Press

Biathlon at a glance

Competition dates: Women's 7.5km, Feb. 10. Men's 10km, Feb. 11. Women's 10km Pursuit, Men's 12.5km Pursuit, Feb. 12. Women's 15km, Feb. 14. Men's 20km, Feb. 15. Women's 12.5km Mass Start, Feb. 17. Men's 15km Mass Start, Feb. 18. Mixed Relay, Feb. 20. Women's 4x6km Relay, Feb. 22. Men's 4x7.5km Relay, Feb. 23.

Martin Fourcade has been the sport's most dominant competitor since the 2011-12 season, when he won the first of six straight World Cup total score championships. He won two golds and a silver at the Sochi Games in 2014 and remains the No. 1 biathlete in the world.

The 29-year-old Fourcade already has more medals than any French Olympian in history and now, still largely in his prime, has a chance to leave South Korea as one of the most decorated athletes at this year's Winter Games.

WHAT IS IT? Skis and guns — say what? The biathlon combines the strength and speed of cross-country skiing with the marksmanship of shooting a rifle. Racers ski around a course with .22-caliber small-bore rifles strapped to their back, then stop at various locations and shoot at targets 50 meters away. Athletes are penalized for misses, so the sport requires poise to settle the nerves following the exertion of energy from skiing.

MEDAL FAVORITES: While Fourcade is the favorite for the men, don't count out Johannes Bøe of Norway, who is second in the World Cup rankings. He is plenty capable of beating Fourcade on a good day. The women's side is a bit more crowded at the top, with Finland's Kaisa Mäkäräinen, Germany's Laura Dahlmeier and Slovakia's Anastasiya Kuzmina in the hunt. Belarus' Darya Domracheva won three of the four women's individual events in Sochi. She's not quite at the top of her game but certainly thrives in pressure situations and can't be counted out.

THE KING IS GONE: Like Elvis in music or Richard Petty in auto racing, Norway's Ole Einar Bjørndalen is simply known as The King to those who follow the biathlon. The 44-year-old has won 13 Olympic medals — including eight golds — which is more than any man in Winter Olympics history. However, he failed to qualify for his seventh Olympic Games.

— Steve Reed, Associated Press

Ski jumping at a glance

Competition dates: Men's normal hill, Feb. 8-10. Women's normal hill, Feb. 12. Men's large hill, Feb. 16-17. Team event large hill, Feb. 19.

With a historic win on the World Cup circuit this season, double Olympic champion Kamil Stoch is in peak form as he aims to defend his ski jumping titles at the Pyeongchang Games.

The 30-year-old Pole won both the normal and large hill events at the 2014 Sochi Olympics, adding to his world title on the large hill a year before.

MEDAL FAVORITES: Slovenia's Peter Prevc won silver on the normal hill and bronze on the large hill in Sochi. While he has struggled this year on the World Cup circuit he will be banking on experience that includes winning the 2016 World Cup and the 2016 Four Hills.

Germany's Richard Freitag has three World Cup wins so far this season but fell during the Innsbruck stop of the Four Hills and suffered a hip injury that could jeopardize his Olympic medal hopes.

Andreas Wellinger of Germany has been on the podium five times this season and will also be a strong medal contender.

RIISING STARS: Daniel Andre Tande. The 23-year-old has three World Cup wins overall and has performed well this season with three podium finishes. The Norwegian finished second at the Innsbruck stage of the Four Hills and could be set for a breakthrough in Pyeongchang.

POTENTIAL RECORD SETTERS: Another jumper to keep an eye on in Pyeongchang will be ageless wonder Noriaki Kasai. Known as "Legend Kasai" in his native Japan, the 45-year-old will be competing in his eighth consecutive Olympics.

Kasai would become the sole record-holder for most Winter Olympic appearances if he competes in Pyeongchang. He made his Olympic debut at the 1992 Albertville Games in France, and has appeared at every event since. He has earned three medals, including team silver at Lillehammer in 1994, and silver for the large hill and team bronze at Sochi.

He is the oldest Olympic ski jumping medalist and the oldest ski jumping World Cup individual event winner.

— Jim Armstrong, Associated Press

WINTER OLYMPICS

New mass start
spices up the ice

By BETH HARRIS
Associated Press

The big oval is going to get a lot more crowded at the Pyeongchang Games.

Speedskating is spicing itself up with the Olympic debut of the mass start, featuring up to 24 skaters racing 16 laps at the same time. That's quite a change from the traditional time trial format in which pairs race against the clock.

The sport's big names — from Shani Davis to Claudia Pechstein to Sven Kramer and Ireen Wust — will toe the starting line in pursuit of more gold to add to their glittering collections.

Speedskating begins Feb. 10 with the women's 3,000 meters at the Gangneung Oval.

Here are some things to watch on the big oval:

Don't miss: The mass start brings a bit of short track sass to long track. There are four intermediate sprints throughout the mass start. The top three skaters in those sprints earn points, as do the top three crossing the finish line. The medalists are determined by the top three finishers, while the rest of the standings are decided based on the sprint points. During the race, lasting between 7½ and 8 minutes for the men and women, respectively, there will be breathers, skaters jockeying for position and all-out sprints. There may be tactics, too, with countries deciding to work together in an effort to get on the podium. The U.S. is a medal contender in the men's and women's races. Joey Mantia won the world title last season, while Heather Bergsma finished third at worlds. The event closes the competition on Feb. 24.

I, Claudia: At age 45, Pechstein could be a mother to her fellow speedskaters. The German will become the first woman to compete in seven Winter Olympics. She has a chance to become the oldest Winter Olympic medalist in an individual event and the first person to win the same individual Winter Olympic event four times (she won the 5,000 meters in 1994, 1998 and 2002). Pechstein won a 5,000 World Cup race last fall. The owner of nine Olympic medals, she missed the 2010 Games because of a two-year blood doping ban. She denied having irregular blood counts.

Competition dates: Women's 3000, Feb. 10. Men's 5000, Feb. 11. Women's 1500, Feb. 12. Men's 1500, Feb. 13. Women's 1000, Feb. 14. Men's 10,000, Feb. 15. Women's 5,000, Feb. 16. Men's Team Pursuit, Feb. 18, 21. Women's team pursuit, Feb. 19, 21. Women's 500, Feb. 18. Men's 500, Feb. 19. Men's 1000, Feb. 23. Men's and women's mass start, Feb. 24.

cal passport levels and fought the ban in the court system for several years. Besides the 5,000, Pechstein is a contender in the mass start. She turns 46 during the Games.

Orange is the old gold: Defending Olympic champions Kramer and Wust lead a strong Dutch team again. Kramer will be going for his third 5,000 title in a row, while seeking to add a 10,000 title and help the pursuit team to a second straight gold. Wust has her sights set on three more golds in the 1,500, 3,000 and team pursuit. The Netherlands dominated the dozen speedskating events in Sochi four years ago, winning eight golds and 23 medals overall. However, with rules limiting entries per nation to two instead of three skaters for some races, the Dutch may cede some spots on the podium.

American redemption: The U.S. is intent on bouncing back from an embarrassing showing in Sochi, where the nation's most successful Winter Olympic sport was shut out. Bergsma and Brittany Bowe have dominated the 1,000 and 1,500 distances internationally while trading spots atop World Cup podiums. On the men's side, Davis is back for a fifth Olympics at age 35. The two-time gold medalist in the 1,000 isn't as dominant, but he hasn't lost his passion for the sport. Mitch Whitman is medal threats in the



Germany's
Claudia Pechstein

Michael Sohn/AP

SPEEDSKATING



JOHN LOCHER/AP

Shani Davis competes in the men's 1,500 meters during the U.S. Olympic long track speed skating trials in Milwaukee. Davis is headed to his fifth Olympics hoping to add to his two gold medals and two silvers from the Turin and Vancouver Games.

Davis out to cement legacy

By BETH HARRIS
Associated Press

As a kid, Shani Davis always wanted to be the fastest skater on the ice. He didn't care about ribbons or trophies or medals.

He's picked up quite a few of those during his stellar speedskating career, although the ensuing acclaim and hoopla never appealed to him either.

Now 35, Davis is heading to his fifth Olympics, searching for the kind of speed that would get him on the podium and burnish his legacy as one of the sport's all-time greats.

"I still want to win. I still want to be the best in the world," he said. "I still have fun. I still enjoy it."

Davis was the first black athlete to win an individual gold medal at the Winter Games, and this time he won't be the only person of color on the U.S. team.

Erin Jackson joins him on the long-track squad, while Maame Biney is the second black speedskater to make the short-track team. Davis set the standard there, too, qualifying for his first Olympics in short track in 2002, although he didn't compete in Salt Lake City.

"You've inspired me and paved the way," Biney tweeted to Davis recently.

Davis captured gold in the 1,000 meters at the Turin and Vancouver Games. He owns a pair of silver medals in the 1,500, too. Those are precious memories. He wants to banish the bad ones from Sochi.

Four years ago, the Americans failed to win any medals at the big oval for the first time since 1984. Davis finished eighth in the 1,000 and 11th in the 1,500. He was 24th in the 500, using the event as

'I'm just going to put my head down and I'm going to do the work. I'm going to go out there and fight.'

Shani Davis
on his fifth Olympic Games

a warm-up for his two strongest distances.

Those results left Davis pondering his future in the sport he's loved since he first started skating as a 6-year-old in his hometown of Chicago.

But he rebounded to earn a world title in the 1,000 in 2015. He struggled during the recent World Cup season, finishing no higher than 12th in four 1,000 races.

"It's just getting back to that moment and having that opportunity to exceed on the highest levels of competitiveness at the Olympics," he said. "Everyone is really motivated to go back and compete at the highest level and try to bring home medals. We're definitely a force."

In his own understated way, so is Davis to his less experienced teammates.

"He looks after the younger people like me and gives great advice. He's not selfish at all," two-time Olympian Emery Lehman said. "He'll go out of his way to help you out and having someone like him there is really good for the team. It also shows how hard he's willing to fight to bounce back from Sochi. Seeing that kind of influences the rest of us to keep our heads up and keep grinding."

Davis is an anomaly in the sport. He has trained separately from the U.S. team for years, including stints in South Korea and

the Netherlands, and goes without a coach. He sets his own training regimen and takes care of a body that isn't as quick to bounce back at his age.

"I never used to worry about these things when I was young," he said. "Everything becomes more urgent when you start weighing the negatives over the positives."

At last month's U.S. trials, Davis finished second in the 1,000 behind Joey Mantia. Davis finished third in the 1,500.

"I've seen them skating really fast and I'm like, 'OK, I can skate fast too, but they're even skating faster and what am I going to do?'" he said of his fellow Americans. "I'm just going to put my head down and I'm going to do the work. I'm going to go out there and fight."

That blue-collar mentality is something Davis has honed going back to his childhood. He didn't always have the best skates or skisuit, but he had a singular determination and the love and support of his mother, Cheri.

"I'm just honored that I can still be strong enough at this day and age, with all the things that have been going on with me and my skating, the ups and downs, be able to keep a solid head," he said, "and staying motivated and believing in myself and not being discouraged or easily defeated."

WINTER OLYMPICS

SPEEDSKATING

Altitude adjustment

After getting shut out of medals in Sochi, US added oval at sea level to its training

By GENARO C. ARMAS
Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — U.S. Speedskating needed an altitude adjustment after getting shut out in Sochi.

Maybe the change will help the United States reclaim golden glory this month at the Pyeongchang Olympics.

The U.S. team was left off the medal stand in 2014 after training too long at altitude even though those games were held near sea level in Russia.

Fast forward four years and the Americans have adjusted their preparation routine to spend more time training at the Pettit National Ice Center, one of the sport's important venues, ahead of the Pyeongchang Games. Like Pettit, the oval in South Korea is at sea level.

"Having them be here is going to give them a similar [feel] on the ice once they get over to Korea," said Bonnie Blair Cruikshank, a vice president of the Pettit's board of directors. She's also speedskating royalty as a five-time Olympic gold medalist who spent much time training at the big rink on the outskirts of Milwaukee.

"It's a perfect place for them to train and know what they're going to be feeling like" in South Korea, Blair Cruikshank said.

The Pettit had been overtaken by the Utah Olympic Oval, which is about 4,600 feet above sea level, as the home for top speedskaters in recent years. The U.S. Olympic trials were held in Utah four years ago ahead of Sochi.

A lack of familiarity with high-tech skins suits was among other factors contributing to the embarrassing outcome for the United States in what had been its most successful Winter Olympics sport. U.S. Speedskating held its pre-Sochi camp at a frigid outdoor

'I just think it's like training with a weight vest for another sport.'

Jonathan Garcia
US speedskater on training at sea level

rink in the mountains of Italy.

This time, the Americans held their camp indoors at the Pettit, where the Olympic trials also were held for the first time since 1998. Another camp at the Pettit in January 2017 sandwiched a visit typically held each year in September. "Four years ago when we selected our team in Salt Lake, there was a lot of push-back—the Milwaukee people were upset," said Guy Thibault, U.S. Speedskating's high performance director. "Sochi is a slower rink, and people were wondering why we're picking a team at altitude."

Logistics played a role, too. Thibault noted, with NBC needing the selections to take place in Utah. The short-track trials immediately followed the long-track trials in 2014, and television coverage is good for publicity for a sport that draws the most attention in Olympic years.

The move to Milwaukee worked out this year.

"It's better for the sport overall," Thibault said.

At higher altitudes, "there's less air slowing you down" because the density is thinner, Thibault said. A skater can glide a little more.

"So you're cutting through the air a lot faster in Salt Lake, hitting the air at higher speeds, a lot less resistance," said Brittany



MORRY GASH/AP

Jonathan Garcia competes in the men's 500 meters during the U.S. Olympic speedskating trials in Milwaukee. Americans have adjusted their preparation routine to spend more time training at the Pettit National Ice Center in Milwaukee, which is at sea level, ahead of the Pyeongchang Games.

Bowe, a 2014 Olympian and medal contender this year. Bowe and fellow American Heather Bergsma have dominated the 1,000 and 1,500 distances internationally.

At sea level, it takes a little more energy to cut through the thicker air.

"Therefore the times are slower," Bowe said. "You just have to adjust the way that you're skating a little bit, you have to adjust your mental tactics and capacity and realize you're not going to be hitting those speeds in Salt Lake."

Olympian Jonathan Garcia said team members have probably spent about eight weeks in Milwaukee in each of the last two years. He feels good heading into South Korea after reaching personal bests at sea level.

"I just think it's like training with a weight vest for another sport. It gives you that extra resistance that you wouldn't have in Salt Lake," Garcia said. "So it's not

so much as a shock to the body."

Milwaukee offers added comfort because of its speedskating roots.

The Pettit is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Before the Pettit opened in 1992, the location was home to the outdoor Wisconsin Olympic Ice Rink, where five-time gold medalist Eric Heiden trained. Blair Cruikshank and another gold medalist, Dan Jansen, trained at the Pettit ahead of the 1994 Winter Games in Lillehammer, Norway.

The return of the Olympic trials in early January drew sold-out crowds, a sign that it may not take another two decades for the most important speedskating event in the United States to return to Wisconsin.

"For the sport, I'm excited for the Olympic trials and the excitement it created," Blair Cruikshank said. "Now it's nice that this is the facility where they were [training] in for their final preparations."



FELIPE DANA/AP

American Maame Biney skates during a short track speedskating training session on Tuesday in Gangneung, South Korea. Biney is the first black female skater to make the U.S. short track team.

Short track at a glance

Competition dates: Men's 1500, Feb. 10. Women's 500, Feb. 10, 13. Women's 3000 Relay, Feb. 10, 20. Men's 1000, Feb. 13, 17. Men's 5000 Relay, Feb. 13, 22. Women's 1500, Feb. 17. Men's 500, Feb. 20, 22. Women's 1000, Feb. 20, 22.

If you like your Olympic competition staid and sportsmanlike, the short track speedskating rink isn't the place.

The skaters' helmets and pads are a dead giveaway elbows will be flying at high speeds.

Darting down low or around the pack to secure a better position can cause crashes that earned the sport its reputation as roller derby on ice. Throw in the fact that South Korea is a hotbed for short track and it makes sense that Gangneung Ice Arena will seat 12,000 spectators for the rock 'em, sock 'em action.

How prickly and passionate is the host country about the sport that has been its best? Apolo Ohno, the most decorated U.S. Winter Olympian, was once public enemy No. 1 there.

At the 2002 Salt Lake City Games, South Koreans believed Ohno stole the

gold from Kim Dong-sung, who finished first in the 1,500 meters but was disqualified for blocking. Ohno threw up his arms as he tried to pass Kim, as though to cry foul. When Ohno claimed his gold, thousands of angry emails shut down the U.S. Olympic Committee server for hours.

The animosity toward Ohno grew so heated that the entire American short-track team withdrew from a World Cup event held in South Korea in 2003, citing death threats against Ohno. In 2005, he traveled in South Korea, reportedly under police guard.

Ohno will be at the rink in Gangneung doing commentary for NBC, the U.S. network carrying the games.

The five days of short track begin Feb. 10 with the men's 1,500 meters.

NO VIKTOR THE GREAT: Six-time gold medalist Viktor Ahn won't be returning to skate in his birth country after competing as a Russian in Sochi. Russian officials said the International Olympic Committee has refused to grant Ahn an invitation amid its vetting of the country's athletes for possible doping links.

MAKING HISTORY: Maame (MAH-may) Biney (BYE-nee) is the first black female skater to make a U.S. short track Olympic team. The 17-year-old

was born in Ghana and moved to Virginia with her father as a 6-year-old. She started skating soon after. Her explosive speed off the starting line and giddy personality could make her a star at the games even if she doesn't medal.

U.S. CHANCES: The Americans' best hope for a medal is in the men's 5,000-meter relay. They're ranked third in the world behind No. 1 Canada and South Korea. Three-time Olympian J.R. Celski has a shot in the 1,500. Olympic rookie Biney has an outside chance in the women's 500.

INDIVIDUAL EVENTS: On the men's side, South Korea, China and Canada have strong medal contenders in the 500, 1,000 and 1,500. Sijinkie Knegt is the rare Dutch short tracker, most of his countrymen are known for their success in long track. In the women's events, the host country—including Choi Min-jeong and Shim Suk-hee—and veteran Marianne St-Gelais of Canada are medal threats.

RELAY MEDALS: The South Korean women will battle China for gold in the 3,000 relay. In the men's 5,000 relay, Canada is a favorite for gold ahead of South Korea.

—Beth Harris, Associated Press

WINTER OLYMPICS

US twins to have sisterly company

By TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

Just call it a sister thing. Whenever another hockey team has sisters on the rosters, Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson and Monique Lamoureux-Morando take notice.

Well, the U.S. Olympians are twins themselves. Combine that with how few sisters play hockey or reach national teams playing internationally, it's easy enough to notice whenever sisters are dressing up for another country.

"It's just cool to see," Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson said.

The Lamoureux sisters will have some sisterly company at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games. Teammate Hannah Brandt's sister, Marissa, plays for the unified Korean women's team, and Switzerland has two sets of sisters on the roster with Nina, Isabel and Monika Waid-adel, plus twins Laura and Sara Benz. Canada nearly had its own sister act with Sarah and Amy Potomak, though neither made the Olympic team.

Being sisters definitely can provide an edge in hockey. "When we get the opportunity to be on the ice together, there's a chemistry that just never goes away," Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson said. "It's always there. So whenever we have an opportunity to have a couple shifts together or if we're ever put on a unit or line together, it's always there. And we've pushed each other every day whether it's workouts, during on-ice training, it's just that accountability that we've always had growing up."

Even though women's hockey didn't debut at the Olympics until 1998 in Nagano, playing hockey simply was something the Lamoureux sisters were bound

to do. They were born in Fargo, N.D., their father, Pierre, played for the University of North Dakota, and all four of their brothers played hockey in college, with Jacques a Hockey Baker finalist in 2009 with Air Force.

The Lamoureux sisters played a year in college at Minnesota before switching to North Dakota for their final three seasons, the last in 2012-13. They have played internationally for the United States since 2006. Both play forward, though Monique also plays defense. Now 28, the sisters credit each other for their long success, which now includes a third Olympic berth.

"That's part of the reason we've pushed ourselves to this level and been competing at this level for quite a long time is that built-in accountability day-in, day-out even if we're not with the team," Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson said.

'It's just that thing when we're on the ice together, we have that undeniable chemistry.'

Monique Lamoureux-Davidson
US forward

Monique Lamoureux-Davidson calls it the benefit of having grown up together playing every sport together on the same team, even though they haven't played together on the ice as much as people might think. Coaches have often spread the skill by playing them on separate lines.

"It's just that thing when we're on the ice together, we have that undeniable chemistry," she said.

And the American sisters definitely have an Olympic edge having won silver medals in both 2010 and 2014. Jocelyne has 11 points (two goals, nine assists) in 10 Olympic games, while Monique has 13 points (seven goals, six assists) in the same span. The U.S. women's team left Wednesday for South Korea chasing the gold medal that eluded the Americans in Sochi, where the United States blew a 2-0 lead to Canada in the final.



CARLO ALLEGRI/AP

United States players Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson, left, and Monique Lamoureux-Morando aren't the only sets of hockey sisters playing in the Olympics. U.S. teammate Hannah Brandt's sister, Marissa, plays for the unified Korean women's team, and Switzerland has two sets of sisters.

WOMEN'S HOCKEY



JOHN WOODS, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

The United States' Cayla Barnes, right, defends against Canada's Jennifer Wakefield, left, as U.S. goaltender Alex Rigsby keeps her eye on the puck during an exhibition game on Dec. 5.

Canadian women aim for fifth straight gold

By TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

Four years is a long time to wait for a second chance. For some, the chance for golden redemption has been much longer.

The United States women's hockey team has not won Olympic gold since the sport was added to the games in 1998. The Americans have since watched their biggest rival — Canada — take home four straight gold medals. The drought has hurt most since 2014, when the Americans blew a 2-0 lead in the gold medal game and had the puck clank off the post, just missing an empty-net goal before Canada tied it with 54.6 seconds left in regulation. Marie-Philip Poulin scored again for a 3-2 overtime win, keeping the gold medal with the country that created the sport.

"Not everyone was there in Sochi," U.S. forward Hilary Knight said. "We've got players who suffered that heartbreak once, maybe twice, and we've got players who've never felt that. They're going to play fearless and on their toes, regardless. I think all of us are there to win."

The Americans have won four straight world championships, the last in overtime last April in Michigan. Yet Canada just doesn't lose in the Olympics. The world's dominant hockey powers meet in pool play Feb. 15 in a game scheduled so North America can watch

Pool play: Japan vs. Sweden, Switzerland vs. South Korea, Feb. 10; Finland vs. United States, Canada vs. Russia, Feb. 11; Switzerland vs. Japan, Sweden vs. South Korea, Feb. 12; Canada vs. Finland, United States vs. Russia, Sweden vs. Switzerland, Feb. 13; South Korea vs. Japan, United States vs. Canada, Feb. 14; Russia vs. Finland, Switzerland vs. Canada, Feb. 15.

at 10:10 p.m. EST on Feb. 14. If the Pyeongchang Games go as far of the past five Olympics have, they will meet again Feb. 22 with gold at stake once more.

"We've come up short the last two Olympics, and our ultimate goal is just play our best," said American Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson, a two-time silver medalist. "If we can do that, we truly believe we can come out on top."

Things to know about women's hockey at the Pyeongchang Games:

U.S. Drought: Since winning it all in 1998 in Nagano, settling for silver — and bronze, in 2006 — has been a source of angst for the United States. Katie Crowley was on that inaugural U.S. team and said the drought has been surprising considering the quality of players dressing for the Americans. Crowley, now coach at Boston College, said if she had the answer to what went wrong she'd have three gold medals herself. Now she says it's up to the current roster.

"Hopefully, they can do something about it," Crowley said.

Pre-Olympic tuneup: The Americans and Canadians played eight games during the fall. The United States won three of the first four, including two to take their third straight Four Nations Cup title. But Canada and coach Laura Schuler were experimenting with a roster of 28 then. Canada won the final four games, with two decided in overtime and one a shutout. And Canada has named Poulin captain for these games.

"It's a good benchmark to see how we're progressing," U.S. coach Robb Stauber said. "It's extremely tough competition, and I suspect they feel the same."

Said Schuler: "Every time we play them, we learn what we're good at. And we learn where we need to continue to improve."

Korean cooperation: South Korea coach Sarah Murray may have the biggest challenge with officials adding 12 North Korean athletes to her team in late January for Korea's first combined team since 1991. Although the country has had little women's hockey success, the South Koreans are ranked 22nd in the world and hope to ride home-ice advantage to a victory — any victory — in the preliminary round. Korea is in Group B with Sweden, Switzerland and Japan. The Koreans held open pool play Feb. 10 against Switzerland — sixth in the world.

AP Sports Writer Jimmy Golien contributed to this report.

WINTER OLYMPICS

MEN'S HOCKEY

Minus NHL players, tourney is wide open

By STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

When Willie Desjardins coached Canada's 2010 world junior team stacked with future NHL players Taylor Hall, Jordan Eberle, Brayden Schenn, Alex Pietrangolo and goaltenders Jake Allen and Martin Jones, it took a wild final game with John Carlson scoring in overtime to win the gold medal for the United States.

Just like Canada was the most talented team back then, Russia is likely to have that role at the upcoming Winter Olympics. Desjardins isn't concerned about that.

"In this tournament, anybody can win," Desjardins said.

Goodbye, NHL players. Hello, unpredictability.

No NHL participation for the first time since 1994 threatens to upset the traditional world hockey order after Canada has won the past three best-of-best tournaments: the 2016 World Cup, 2014 Sochi Olympics and 2010 Vancouver Olympics. Russia is considered the favorite because it has former NHL players Ilya Kovalchuk, Pavel Datsyuk and Andrei Markov, though Finland could make gold its sixth medal in the past five Games. Sweden could win for the first time since 2006.

Coach Tony Granato's American team was put together with players from European professional leagues, the NCAA and American Hockey League.

"This Olympics is wide open for a lot of reasons," Granato said. "Russia's got the most talented players in the world. They're going to have the team that steps on the ice with the most talented players. Does that make them the best team for two weeks? No. We all know that. We all know how sports works. All you're looking



PETER DAVID JOSEK/AP

Based solely on talent Russia is the favorite to win the Olympic men's hockey tournament. Following Ilya Kovalchuk, right, and Pavel Datsyuk both have NHL experience but now play in Russia's KHL.

for is an opportunity to make the most and be the best that you can be for that period of time."

Because it's such a short tournament with three pool-play games, a qualifying round and then quarterfinals, it could come down to which team gels first after limited preparation time. Or maybe another goaltender will pull off what Latvia's Kristers Gudlevskis almost did when making 55 saves to give Canada a scare in the quarterfinals in Sochi.

"The goaltending matters, too, in an event like this," NBC Sports analyst Pierre McGuire said. "It always matters, but I think in this one, the underdog — if you have an elite goalie — can really do

some damage."

Who's the underdog? It's fair to say host South Korea, in its first Olympics in men's hockey, fits that bill, along with Slovenia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Germany and Norway.

Yet being in a group with Slovenia, Slovakia and Russia is no easy task for the U.S., which boasts 38-year-old semi-retired captain Brian Gionta as its most experienced player. Granato said the U.S. "has lots of pieces that other teams and countries don't know about" and wonders if his team will be overlooked.

Mistake-prone play seems likely, though Gionta doesn't think there will be any lack of sizzle.

"I know there's been some talk

that not having the NHL guys in, you don't have your high-skilled guys," Gionta said. "I think that's a bad representation of the people that are going over there and competing in these games. There's a lot of great hockey players."

All eyes on Dahlin: One of the most dynamic and offensively talented players is also the youngest: Sweden defenseman Rasmus Dahlin, who's projected to be the No. 1 pick in the NHL Draft in June. Dahlin has 11 points in 29 games playing against grown men in the Swedish Hockey League and had six points in seven games at the world juniors. He's just 17.

Who are these guys? When the NHL announced it was out of these Olympics, executives from

Pool play: United States vs. Slovenia, Slovakia vs. Russia, Finland vs. Germany, Feb. 14; Norway vs. Sweden, Czech Republic vs. South Korea, United States vs. Slovakia, Switzerland vs. Canada, Feb. 15; Russia vs. Slovenia, Finland vs. Norway, Canada vs. Czech Republic, Sweden vs. Germany, Feb. 16; Slovenia vs. Slovakia, South Korea vs. Switzerland, Russia vs. United States, Germany vs. Norway, Feb. 17; Sweden vs. Finland, Czech Republic vs. Switzerland, Canada vs. South Korea, Feb. 18.

USA Hockey and Hockey Canada were quick to say every team would have 25 great stories. There are players on almost every team who are familiar because they played in the NHL at one point. Most of the rosters are made up of journeymen plying their trade in pro leagues in Europe, such as Czech Republic captain Martin Erat, Germany's Christian Ehroff and Canada's Ben Scrivens. Americans Troy Terry, Jordan Greenway, Ryan Donato and Will Borgen are currently playing college hockey.

"The tournament in general is going to be built with teams with lots of guys that this is the greatest event for them and they didn't necessarily think they were going to get this opportunity," Canada GM Sean Burke said.

OAR pressure: The Olympic Athletes from Russia team is a favorite to win gold, which would be the first since the Unified Team in 1992. But Russia hasn't medaled since 2002, including a disappointing showing on home ice four years ago. The chance to draw all its players from the Kontinental Hockey League should benefit Russia, which has won four of the past 10 world hockey championships and has the most talent.

Bigger ice makes a difference

By STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

Size matters. Especially when it's 15 feet.

If an Olympic hockey coach coming from North America tried to imitate Gene Hackman in "Hoosiers" and took a tape measure to the rinks in South Korea, it wouldn't add up. International-sized ice is 15 feet wider than rinks used in the NHL, American Hockey League and NCAA — 100 feet compared to 85 — and that's more than enough to change everything.

"It's totally different: two different sports," said Henrik Sedin, who won the 2006 Olympic gold medal with Sweden on the larger ice. "You can have players that are good in the NHL but they can't play on the bigger ice, and then you have guys the other way around where they really succeed on the big ice but when they come over here, they can't play. It's a different

sport."

Big ice makes a big difference where goals are at a premium and five-man defensive units can make the outer edges of the rink feel like a distant planet. Going to the 200-by-100 international ice is a (far-fetched) idea some have suggested might increase scoring in the NHL, but Slovak Olympic coach Craig Ramsay recalls playing for the Buffalo Sabres against the New York Rangers on the big sheet in Lake Placid, N.Y., and the quality of play and offense did not match everyone's expectations.

"It was a hard game because people would be more than willing to beat you (wide) but now they're 50 feet from the net instead of 40 and there's a big difference," Ramsay said. "The (defensemen) are smart and can push you a little bit wider (and) your angles are not nearly as good and the goaltender now can cut down that angle and it's not as easy to score as people think."



ANN YOUNG-JOON/AP

Olympic hockey is played on wider, international-sized rinks that are 15 feet wider than North American rinks, but most European players grew up playing on the big ice.

WINTER OLYMPICS

FIGURE SKATING



TONY AVELAR/AP

American Nathan Chen has five quadruple jumps planned for his Olympic free skate.

Going fourth

Men's medal success likely hinges on landing quads

By BARRY WILNER
Associated Press

It's all about the quad. Yes, the sport is called figure skating. Spins, footwork, synchronicity with the music, theatrics — they all are major components of a performance.

Yet, as they head to the Pyeongchang Olympics, the men who will compete for medals know what the deciding factor will be: that four-revolution jump.

And how many you land. Two-time U.S. champion Nathan Chen plans five in his free skate. He's the only one to land that many in a program; most men are content to do two well, maybe three, usually one in combination with a triple jump.

That just won't do in South Korea.

"I knew it was headed in this direction," says Michael Weiss, who along with Tim Goebel was an ice breaker for Americans doing the quad. "When I was competing and doing a quad lutz, hardly anyone was trying it. But it's like the 4-minute mile, once it's been done, everybody knows they can do it. And then it turns to doing the other quads, doing three or four or, in Nathan's case, five in a program.

"And it's doing all of those not just individually in practice, but back to back to back in the course of a program."

For Chen, the challenge isn't so much all of those quads: a flip in combination and a stand-alone flip; a toe loop in combo; a solo toe loop; and a solo salchow. He struggles more with the triple axel and its front takeoff into a 3½-revolution jump.

Still, even if he doesn't land the axel and hits everything else, it's as if Chen is driving the green on a par 5. He's putting tremendous

pressure on the others — notably defending Olympic champion Yuzuru Hanyu of Japan, Spain's Javier Fernandez, Canada's Patrick Chan — to bring their big sticks, too.

"The idea is to go out there and do everything you can do," the 18-year-old Chen says. "It's more than the jumps, more than the quads, it's the entire package. But the quads are an important part of the package."

Weiss believes that Chen has an advantage simply because he knows his capabilities in the air, and that they might not be attainable for his competitors.

"There's a few skaters who can do all the quads, but now linking them back to back, that's like asking a quarterback to throw a 55-yard pass on the dime," Weiss says. "He does it once or twice, sure. But then doing it consistently over and over, time after time, that's more challenging physically and more challenging mentally."

Watching Chen in practice can be exhausting. Run-throughs of any program can be tiresome for skaters. Chen's sessions border on the absurd when you throw in all the quads.

All that action also can be counterproductive and lead to injuries. Getting hurt might be even more of a threat for other men not as accomplished, even natural, with the jump as Chen is.

"Don't have a skater attempt something that is out of their realm," says Audrey Weisiger, who coached Weiss and many other elite skaters. "It's almost like a physics game. Girls don't jump high enough — it takes over a half-second or more for four turns — and you've got to turn fast enough, too. You must understand the mechanics of the actual skill."

"Once a skater has got that going, they mentally have to be

ready to take that step. If you back off, it will be a bad outcome. You can't hold back."

Weisiger often has used a jumping pole, something akin to a safety net, as her skaters would set out to learn jumps. That's true for anything from a double loop to a quad lutz.

When it comes to the quads, she would not recommend a skater trying too many in one session, comparing it to lifting weights. She also notes how rare it is for him to land one on an initial attempt.

Eventually, as the skater becomes more proficient with the jump and his confidence grows, the pole disappears.

Then there's the psychological part of tackling the quad.

"When they pop it," she says of aborted attempts, "it's 100 percent mental, they haven't made up their mind. There is no turning back. The power of rotation starts from moment they start to lift, and they decide as they're lifting, 'I am not doing this one.'"

Plus, there's the internal pressure skaters put on themselves to get those quads done.

"It's this game they play: 'You have to do these like your back is against the wall and something terrible is going to happen to you if you don't,'"

Weisiger says. "They think the consequence of not going through it is bad. 'They need to know, 'Don't go into it unless you have made up your mind.' That is how they get hurt. You can't kind of do it, it must be 100 percent."

Chen is 100 percent in on the quad. When asked if five of them are necessary, he smiles slyly.

"I like the idea of pushing the limits," he says. "It's what I think the sport needs is taking steps forward."

And, apparently, leaps — four at a time.

Women haven't made leap forward

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

When the sprightly youngster with the blond hair and brilliant smile stepped onto the ice at the White Ring in Nagano, she knew it would take a flawless program to win Olympic gold.

Tara Lipinski delivered. She laid down seven triple jumps in a jaw-dropping performance, each accompanied by an audible gasp from the crowd. And her trademark triple loop-triple loop combination, along with a closing combination featuring two more triples, was enough to push her past fellow American Michelle Kwan and to the top of the podium at the 1998 Winter Games.

It was a free skate that would hold up remarkably well today — unlike the gold medal-winning men's performance.

While the women's event has stagnated over the past two decades, the heights at which they fly having seemingly reached a ceiling, the men have continued to push skyward. Ilya Kulik won gold at the Nagano Games largely on the strength of his quadruple toe loop, but some experts think it will take a program packed with five or six quads to win gold at the coming Pyeongchang Olympics.

"The women have definitely not been on the same track as the men with the quad revolution," said Lipinski, now an NBC Sports analyst. "But I do see a turn since the last Olympics with all the Russian ladies and their easy triple-triples, back-loaded programs and tricks to beat the judging."

Lipinski understands the nuances of the sport, though. She sees the inherent difficulty in step sequences and spins, the kind of stuff that looks easy — almost blasé — to the casual viewers.

The soaring jumps are what stand out to them. And four spins are more dramatic than three.

So far, Japan's Miika Ando is the only woman to land a quadruple jump in a competition, hitting a quad salchow at the Junior Grand Prix final in 2002. Sasha Cohen of the U.S. landed one in practice a year earlier for Skate America but abandoned the risky jump once her long program began, and the idea of attempting one in a major competition has remained dormant for much of the last decade.

The biggest reason for the stagnation: simple biology.

Female skaters often reach their pinnacle by the time they are 20 years old. Their power-to-weight ratio peaks before puberty, and the rapid changes to their bodies during their teenage years often throw off the intricate timing that they've worked years to achieve.

The men, meanwhile, get stronger when puberty hits. Their ability to fly higher and spin faster only grows in their early 20s, allowing many to go quad crazy when they step on the ice.



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

American Mirai Nagasu has a triple axel, the most difficult jump women are landing in competition, in her repertoire.

"The people succeeding are the guys," said Audrey Weisiger, longtime coach of two-time Olympian Michael Weiss. "If you want to track the ascension of skills attained, it's all men. [The women] are not doing anything different than what Kristi Yamaguchi was doing."

"Women are good to a certain level and then their bodies change. They reach puberty," Weisiger said. "They are not as strong and probably more emotional. Their skills deteriorate much faster."

But as in most sports, innovation is the best way to avoid irrelevance.

Mirai Nagasu understands that concept. The 24-year-old California native made her second Olympic team by pulling off a triple axel — a points-lucrative jump involving 3½ rotations from a forward leap, or the closest thing to a quadruple jump any woman is doing these days.

"I love I'm being recognized for having the ability to accomplish such a difficult jump," she said. "It took me three years to learn my double axel and a really long time for the triple axel, and I'm proud to be recognized for something nobody, else in the U.S. can do right now."

Lipinski thinks it's just a matter of time until more skaters can pull off the triple axel, and that a day will come when a young woman can consistently land a quadruple jump in competition.

The ceiling, as the saying goes, truly is made of glass.

"I think it's advancing, even if you look at the junior level; I saw a Japanese skater land a triple axel-triple toe," Lipinski said. "I think over the next few years the women are going to catch up and it's going to change dramatically the women's event."

WINTER OLYMPICS

FIGURE SKATING

American Chen, Canadians set to soar

By BARRY WILNER

Associated Press

U.S. men's figure skating history at the Olympics is gilded with gold.

Nathan Chen has his sights set on some more.

At 18 and already a two-time national champion, Chen is among the favorites for the Pyeongchang Games. Some say there are five reasons why: the number of quadruple jumps he has planned for the free skate. And that outrageous agenda puts him in a stratosphere to which his fellow contenders can't soar.

There's more to Chen, though, than the four-revolution jump that essentially has become the decider in the men's event. He's improved every aspect of his performance — though his triple axel can be wonky — from artistry to footwork to spins to overall presentation.

"You need the full package," Chen said. "The jumps have come quicker than the rest for me. Maybe it's innate. I have a body built to jump. I need to find a purpose in my movements, to feel the program and the music, to analyze what I was doing right and wrong. For a while, it had all been done pretty much by feel."

"Now, with the help of my coaches and choreographers, I have an understanding of each move. I have felt more passion in my skating and more of a connection to the music."

Chen is the American with the best shot at gold in South Korea.

But the Maple Leaf could be on frequent display above the medals podium.

Canada has the strongest overall figure skating team and with medal contenders in all four events.

For the Canadians, 2010 champions and 2014 runners-up Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir are positioned to add more prizes to their ice dance collection. Meghan Du-



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

Nathan Chen, 18 and already a two-time national champion, is among the favorites in Pyeongchang.

hamel and Eric Radford are in the mix in pairs. Patrick Chan will try to make his final Olympics more memorable than his previous visits in a wide open men's field, and Kaetlyn Osmond and Gabrielle Daleman should challenge in the women's event.

"Canada is strong in all four disciplines," said Brian Orser, who trains Daleman as well as defending men's champion Yuzuru Hanyu of Japan and two-time world champ Javier Fernandez of Spain. "Especially in the last four years, our two ladies have really risen to top, and that is exciting."

"They have the biggest team, I know that, and one of the strongest," Orser said. "They will be in contention with that team of Russian skaters."

The Russians, of course, will not be representing their country after the Sochi doping scandal led

to sanctions against the nation by the IOC. But they will be on hand, skating under the Olympic flag, and are expected to be quite representative, particularly in women and pairs.

A look at the names to watch in the four figure skating events at Pyeongchang:

Women: This seemed to be the province of Evgenia Medvedeva, the Russian dynamo who won the last two world titles and was undefeated since 2015. But in her final major competition before Pyeongchang, she lost to 15-year-old training partner Alina Zagitova at the European Championships. In Moscow, no less.

Zagitova's technical brilliance could make her the front-runner at the Olympics, but Medvedeva's track record is so impressive that she deserves top billing.

Sochi bronze winner Carolina

Kostner of Italy, the veteran of the field who turns 31 the day before the opening ceremony, will need to showcase her elegance in the absence of jumping ability.

Daleman upset Osmond at the Canadian championships and both will be in medal consideration, along with Japan's Satoko Miyahara and Kaori Sakamoto. The best shot for the U.S. could be nationals runner-up Mirai Nagasu, who finished fourth in Vancouver and whose triple axel is the wild card.

Men: Chen has raised the jumping bar so high with his collection of quads that if he skates cleanly, his technical marks are good enough to join the likes of Dick Button, Scott Hamilton, Brian Boitano and Evan Lysacek as Olympic gold medalist from the U.S.

His main challengers figure to

Competition dates: Team event Feb. 9-12. Pairs, Feb. 14-15. Men's, Feb. 16-17. Ice Dance, Feb. 19-20. Women's, Feb. 21-23.

be Fernandez, fresh off his sixth European title, and Hanyu, the Japanese star who has been hampered by an ankle ligament injury and only recently got back to training.

"He is a focused athlete, so I hope he starts gearing up for the Pyeongchang Olympics," said Yoshiko Kobayashi of the Japanese skating federation.

Japan's Shoma Uno also is stout. Chan could be in the mix. And two other Americans, Adam Rippon, who is 47-year-old Vincent Zhou, will aim for the top 10.

Ice dance: Virtue and Moir could stamp themselves as the most accomplished duo in Olympic annals with another gold medal. They've taken sabbaticals and returned just as innovative and mesmerizing.

As in 2014, when they barely lost to Americans Meryl Davis and Charlie White, the Canadians face formidable foes in France's Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron. Virtue and Moir edged them at the 2017 worlds, only to see the French win the Grand Prix Final in December.

U.S. champions Madison Hubbell and Zach Donohue, siblings Maia and Alex Shibutani, and veterans Madison Chock and Evan Bates also will contend. The Shibutanis are world bronze medalists.

Pairs: China's Sui Wenjing and Han Cong are world champions, and their athleticism is stunning.

"They can do side-by-side triples in a heartbeat if they need to," Millikan said.

They might need to, considering a loaded field includes Germany's Aliona Savchenko and Bruno Massot; China's Yu Xiaoyu and Zhang Hao; Duhamel and Radford; and Russia's Evgenia Tarasova and Vladimir Morozov.

Team event opens competition, offers opportunities

By DAVE SKRETTA

Associated Press

GANGNEUNG, South Korea — The only thing missing from Canadian figure skater Patrick Chan's résumé is an Olympic gold medal.

He's won three world championships. Two grand prix finals. Twice he's stood on the second step of an Olympic podium, an infuriating few inches from what would be the pinnacle of his career.

So even though the 28-year-old Chan is focused on the men's competition at the Pyeongchang Games, he is aware of the tremendous opportunity presented by the team event. It begins Friday with Canada favored to win gold after finishing second in its debut four years ago at Sochi.

"The medal is what you make of it," Chan said, when asked whether a team gold medal in some way be lesser than an individual gold. "It may not be the same

for every skater or another teammate, but for me at this point in my career, anything at this point is a bonus."

Indeed, the way skaters are approaching the team competition varies widely.

There are those from Canada, the U.S. and the Russian athletes who are eyeing gold, or at least a spot on the podium. It's an opportunity to start the Olympics on a high, and potentially build up momentum they can carry into the rest of the Games.

Then there are those from France and Italy, countries that have medal hopefuls in individual events but not enough depth across the four disciplines to realistically compete for a team medal.

For them, it's a chance to work out the kinks in a competitive environment, fine-tuning their own programs for what really matters in the coming days.

"We're really focused on our personal event," said Guillaume Cizeron, who with Gabriella Papadakis are two-time ice

dance world champions and among the favorites to that competition.

"I feel like the team event is a great opportunity for team spirit and what the games represent," Cizeron said. "But our main focus is obviously the individual event."

The powerhouse nations certainly seem to be putting more emphasis on the event.

They've been closely guarding their line-ups all week, a unique bit of gamesmanship for an otherwise individual sport, and have waited until the last possible moment to announce who will skate each event.

There is strategy in putting together the lineup — some individuals are better in short programs and others excel in the free skate. Plus, the pairs teams that are medal contenders must be cognizant of the fact that their individual event begins two days after the team event finishes.

"We know that our country isn't in the favorites to medal, so it makes things different," Papadakis said. "Our main goal is

the individual event. It may be different if we were going for a medal."

Ten nations have qualified for the team competition, and each will send out skaters in each of the four disciplines in the short program. They receive points based on their finish — so margin of victory doesn't matter — with the top five teams advancing to the free skate.

Medals will be awarded Monday after the final discipline, the ladies' free skate.

"It was so much fun to be able to be part of the team event in Sochi, to compete as a team and not just as an individual athlete," said Canada's Kaetlyn Osmond, a medal contender in the individual event.

"I'm focusing on my own programs," she said, "but to have the team atmosphere in the kiss-and-cry, and the podium, it's so incredible. And to be able to compete more times at the Olympics, I'm definitely not going to argue against it. I just love the team aspect of it."

SPORTS

WINTER OLYMPICS

Politics
in playAmid tensions in Korea, numbers
still more likely to define GamesBy TIM DAHLBERG
Associated Press

The world hasn't seen such an intersection of sports and politics since the U.S. boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympics and the Soviets returned the favor four years later in Los Angeles.

The Winter Olympics begin Friday in a rugged and brutally cold area of rural mountains near the North Korean border, with a lot more at stake than the glittery medals chased by the best ice and snow athletes in the world.

SEE TENSIONS ON PAGE 56

Olympic coverage inside:

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- Davis rips process after coin toss selects Hamlin as U.S. flagbearer, Page 56
- Speedskating upping ante with mass start race, Page 58
- Without NHL stars, hockey tourney wide open, Page 61
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The United States' Hailey Langland trains ahead of the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, on Thursday.

Gregory Bull/AP



Cavs overhaul roster, trade Thomas to LA » NBA, Page 54

